Voice

Thai Pongal Publication 2013



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Tel: 416-240-0078 | Fax: 416-240-1601

www.canadiantamilcongress.ca
info@canadiantamilcongress.ca

VOICE
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தமிழ்த் தாய் வாழ்த்து

வாழ்க நிரந்தரம் வாழ்க தமிழ்மொழி
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வான மளந்தனைத்தும் அளந்திடும்
வண் மொழி வாழியவே
ஏழ் கடல் வைப்பினுந் தன் மணம் வீசி
இசை கொண்டு வாழியவே
எங்கள் தமிழ் மொழி எங்கள் தமிழ் மொழி
என்றென்றும் வாழியவே
சூழ்கலி நீங்கத் தமிழ் மொழி ஓங்கத்
துலங்குக வையகமே
தொல்லை வினைதரு தொல்லை யகன்று
சுடர்க தமிழ் நாடே
வாழ்க தமிழ் மொழி வாழ்க தமிழ் மொழி
வாழ்க தமிழ் மொழியே
வானம் அறிந்தனைத்தும் அறிந்து
வளர் மொழி வாழியவே.

Canadian National Anthem

O Canada!
Our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.

With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!

From far and wide,
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

Mission and Objectives

The Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC) is a non-profit organization which serves as the voice of Tamil Canadians. Headquartered in Toronto, the CTC has chapters across the country and an elected board of directors. The non-partisan organization works as the community's spokesperson on the municipal, provincial, federal and international levels.

- Uphold Canadian values of human rights, multiculturalism, religious and cultural diversity, gender equality, pluralism and volunteerism
- Promote the participation of Tamil Canadians in activities of local, regional, provincial and national importance
- Work with various levels of Governments in Canada to highlight and resolve issues impacting Tamil Canadians
- Cooperate with Canadian and international organizations in alleviating the suffering and provide humanitarian assistance to Tamils worldwide
- Champion for equality, equality rights and equal opportunity for all diverse groups, in particular gender equality, by working towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and intolerance
- Recognize and support the social, cultural and political aspirations of the Tamils in the island of Sri Lanka and worldwide
- Advance the research, study and usage of the Tamil language and culture
- Develop and enhance working relationships with other ethnocultural groups in Canada

Mission et Objectifs

Le congrès Tamoul canadien (CTC), est un organisme à but non lucratif qui représente la voix des Tamouls canadiens. Le siège social étant à Toronto, le CTC possède chapitres dans l'ensemble du pays ainsi qu'un conseil administratif élu. L'organisme agit comme un porte-parole non-partisan de la communauté au niveau municipal, provincial, fédéral et international.

- Confirmez les valeurs canadiennes des droits de l'homme, multiculturalisme, diversité religieuse et culturelle, égalité entre les sexes, pluralisme et volontarisme
- Favorisez la participation des canadiens tamoul dans les activités d'importance locale, régionale, provinciale et nationale
- Travaillez avec de divers niveaux des gouvernements au Canada pour accentuer et résoudre des problèmes effectuant les canadiens tamoul
- Coopérez avec des organismes canadiens et internationaux à alléger la douleur et fournissez l'assistance humanitaire aux tamoul dans le monde entier
- Champion pour l'égalité, les droits d'égalité et l'égalité des chances pour tous les groupes divers, en particulier égalité entre les sexes, en travaillant vers l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination et d'intolérance
- Identifiez et soutenez les aspirations sociales, culturelles et politiques des Tamoul sur île du Sri Lanka et dans le monde entier
- Avancez la recherche, l'étude et l'utilisation de la langue et de la culture tamoul
- Développez et augmentez les relations de travail avec d'autres groupes ethnoculturels au Canada

கனடிய தமிழர் பேரவை
நோக்கம் மற்றும் குறிக்கோள்கள்

கனடிய தமிழர் பேரவை ஒரு இலாப நோக்கற்ற, கனடியத் தமிழரின் குரலாய் விளங்கும் அமைப்பாகும். ரொறன்ரோவிலே தலைமைப் பணிமனையைக்கொண்ட பேரவை நாடு முழுவதும் 11 கிளைகளோடு ஒரு தேசிய அமைப்பாக விளங்குவதோடு உறுப்பினரால் தெரிவு செய்யப்பட்ட இயக்குனர் சபையையும் கொண்டதாகும்.

பக்கச் சார்பற்றுச் செயற்படும் கனடிய தமிழர் பேரவை கனடியச் சமூகச் செயற்பாடுகளில் தமிழர்களின் பங்கேற்றலை ஊக்குவித்தல், தமிழர்களின் முக்கிய பிரச்சினைகளை முதன்மைப்படுத்துதல் மற்றும் கனடிய விழுமியங்களைப் பேணுவதுடன் வேற்றினச் சமூகங்களும் அரசாங்கங்களும் ஏனைய அமைப்புகளும் தமிழர்களின் சமூக, கலாச்சார மற்றும் அரசியல் பிரச்சினைகளைப் பேசச் செய்தல் போன்றவற்றை முக்கிய நோக்கங்களாகக் கொண்டதாகும்.

கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவையின் குறிக்கோள்கள் சில கீழ்வருமாறு:

- உள்ளூர், கோட்டம், மாநிலம், நாட்டு முதன்மை வாய்ந்த செயற்பாடுகளில் கனடியத் தமிழரது பங்கேற்றலை ஊக்குவித்தல்
- கனடியத் தமிழர் தொடர்பான சிக்கல்களை முன்னிலைப்படுத்தித் தீர்வு காண்பதற்குப் பல்வேறு மட்டக் கனடா அரசுகளோடு இணைந்து செயற்படல்
- தாயகத்திலும், உலகெங்கும் வாழும் தமிழரது சமூக, பண்பாட்டு, அரசியல் வேட்கைகளை ஏற்றுப் போற்றுதல்
- மனித உரிமை, பல்பண்பாடு, சமய–பண்பாட்டுப் பல்வண்மை, பால் ஒப்புமை, பன்மைநெறி, தொண்டுநெறி ஆகிய கனடாவின் விழுமியங்களை மேம்படுத்துதல்
- தமிழ் மொழி மற்றும் பண்பாடு பற்றிய ஆய்வு, கல்வி, பயன்பாடு என்பவற்றை மேம்படுத்துதல்
- கனடாவின் பிற இனப்பண்பாட்டுக் குழுமங்களோடு உறவு பூணுதலும் வளர்த்தலும்
- கனடா மற்றும் பன்னாட்டு அமைப்புகளோடு இணைந்து, உலகளாவிய தமிழ் மக்களின் இன்னல் போக்கலும் மனித நேய உதவி வழங்கலும்
- அனைத்து வேறுபாடுகளையும், பொறுதியின்மையையும் ஒழிப்பதற்குப் பாடுபடுதல், அனைத்துக் குழுமங்களுக்கும் ஒப்பான உரிமை மற்றும் வாய்ப்பு நாடிப் பாடுபடல், சிறப்பாக பால் ஒப்புமை நாடிப் போராடல்.

Message from the President



On behalf of the Canadian Tamil Congress, I am pleased to wish you and your family a Happy Thai Pongal and welcome you to our 6th Annual Dinner. Thai Pongal marks the harvest of crops and is a time to give special thanks to the sun, nature and farmstead livestock. The festival is celebrated by Tamils all around the world.

Thai Pongal is a time of thanksgiving and during this time, the Canadian Tamil Congress would like to thank you! Our work cannot be done without the generous support of our members and friends. You have helped us in so many ways – the time you have committed to our projects, your involvement in our events and your generous financial contributions. It is because of such a strong foundation of support that the Canadian Tamil Congress has grown into what it is today. Thank you.

As I look back at 2012, I see a year that proved to be quite challenging. Despite the challenges we faced as a community, CTC has helped strengthen the voice of Tamil Canadians both in Canada and on the international level. Most recently, CTC organized a timely press conference in the Canadian Parliament after the release of the Secretary General's Internal Review Panel Report on UN Action in Sri Lanka.

As part of our commitment to creating a legacy of volunteerism in our own backyard, CTC organized another successful walk-a-thon in support of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and raised over $46,000! We also joined the David Suzuki Foundation to plant hundreds of trees in Bob Hunter Memorial Park in Markham.

In 2012, CTC launched the Center for Leadership and Innovation, an initiative that is aimed at training our future leaders. We also hosted inspirational individuals like author Frances Harrison and director Beate Arnestad who helped share our stories. CTC took an active role in international advocacy by participating in all three UN Human Rights Council sessions in Geneva. With your support, there is so much more we could do in 2013!

2013 will be an especially big year for CTC, Tamils and Toronto as a whole as we host the 26th annual convention of Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America! Our goal for 2013 is to keep working with the Canadian Government and the international community to call for an independent international investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Sri Lanka. We will participate in the 22nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. Furthermore, if we don't see any tangible changes to the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, we will ask governments to boycott the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting scheduled to be held in November 2013 in Colombo.

As CTC embarks upon a new year, we remain confident that we can count on YOUR support to help us move forward. On behalf of everyone at the Canadian Tamil Congress, I would like to wish you and your family a very happy Thai Pongal and a year filled with happiness, good health and prosperity.

Best wishes,

Suntharamoorthy Umasuthan

President, Canadian Tamil Congress



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1
Lighting of Traditional Lamp

2
Canadian National Anthem and Tamil Thai Vazhthu
Ms. Umananthini Rajendram

3
Silent Tribute

4
Tamil Cultural Welcome Dance
Students of Nirothini Pararajasingham

5
CTC President's Address
Mr. Suntharamoorthy Umasuthan

6
Canadian Tamil Congress Presentation
Mr. Kumar Ratnam

7
Greetings:

Deputy Mayor Jack Heath
City of Markham

Dr. Helena Jaczek MPP,
Oak Ridges - Markham
Government of Ontario

Mr. Chris Alexander, MP
Ajax-Pickering,
Government of Canada

8
Centre for Leadership and Innovation Presentation

9
Book Launch
"Still Counting the Dead" Tamil Version

10
Dinner

11
Presentation of Awards:

Leaders for Change Award
Chief William Blair, Toronto Police Services

Service Excellence Award
Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice
Mr. Fred Carver, Campaign Director

Living Hero Award
"The Doctor"

12
Tamil Cultural Dance Performance
Students of Nirothini Pararajasingham

13
Presentation of Cheque
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health CAMH

14
Acceptance Speech
Dr. Catherine Zahn,
President and CEO,
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

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Keynote Address
Mr. Alan Keenan,
Project Director and Senior Analyst, Sri Lanka
International Crisis Group ICG

16
Vote of Thanks
Ms. Juanita Nathan
Vice President, Canadian Tamil Congress

Master of Ceremonies: Ms. Manjula Selvarajah


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Premier of Ontario - Premier ministre de l'Ontario

January 19, 2013

A Personal Message from the Premier

On behalf of the Government of Ontario, I am delighted to extend warm greetings to everyone attending the Annual Gala Dinner and Thai Pongal celebration of the Canadian Tamil Congress.

To its great advantage, Ontario is a microcosm of world culture. This gives all citizens the opportunity to experience a range of customs and traditions and to learn more about the uniqueness of the many communities which make up our great province. This celebration of Thai Pongal is a reminder that the Tamil Canadian community enjoys a vibrant presence in Ontario and has contributed much to defining and enriching our society.

I would like to acknowledge the great meaning which Thai Pongal has for Tamil Canadians — not only as a time of thanksgiving, but also as an occasion that unites family and friends and underscores the many joys that can be found in a strong and caring community. Thai Pongal also paves the way for new opportunities and fresh beginnings. And with that in mind, I would like to wish everyone present this evening much success, prosperity and happiness in the coming year.

Dalton McGuinty
Premier

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Minister
of Citizenship
and Immigration

Ministre
de la Citoyenneté
et de l'Immigration

Ottawa, Canada K1A 1L1

Greetings from the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to all those celebrating Thai Pongal. On behalf of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, I would like to thank you for your contributions to Canada's diversity and wish you happiness in the year ahead.

Thai Pongal, a festival celebrating the beginning of the harvest season, unites people of all backgrounds and offers many Canadians an opportunity to learn about the heritage and traditions of a culture which may be separate from their own. Canadians are privileged to live in a country where they can discover the diverse traditions of fellow Canadians and be able to join them in their celebrations. The various traditional festivities and thanksgivings celebrations during the festival allow us to reflect, to give thanks and to anticipate the many blessings and new opportunities which the spring will bring.

As Prime Minister Harper noted: "Canadians are rightly proud of the fact that we are a nation of immigrants, people who have come from all corners of the earth and who have worked together to build one of the most peaceful and prosperous nations in human history."

As Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, I would like to thank Tamil Canadians celebrating Thai Pongal for your efforts to further the success of our pluralism.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Jason Kenney, PC, MP
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism

Canada

Pongal Greetings

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Message from



The Mayor: City of Toronto

CITY OF
TORONTO

A Message from the Mayor

It gives me great pleasure to extend greetings and a warm welcome to everyone attending the Thai Pongal Festival and annual gala dinner hosted by the Canadian Tamil Congress.

Established in 2000, the Canadian Tamil Congress is a non-profit organization that serves as the voice of Tamil-Canadians throughout our country.

Observed by Tamils worldwide, Thai Pongal marks the beginning of a new harvest and celebrates the prosperity associated with a bountiful harvest. The start of this ancient festival commences with the birth of the month of Thai and is believed to bring new beginnings and new ways to achieve one's goals throughout the year.

Festivals like these are part of a thriving and flourishing city. Intercultural relations amongst our very diverse communities are essential to building strong, successful and vibrant cities.

On behalf of Toronto City Council, I thank the organizers who made this event possible. Please accept my best wishes for an enjoyable and memorable festival.

Yours truly,

Mayor Rob Ford
City of Toronto

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MARKHAM

Frank Scarpitti
Mayor

January 19, 2013

MESSAGE FROM MAYOR SCARPITTI

On behalf of Members of Council and the City of Markham, I am pleased to extend a warm and sincere welcome to all those attending the 6th Annual Gala Dinner hosted by the Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC).

Our community is immeasurably enriched by the diversity of its people and by the special gifts of heritage and culture we each carry within. This special gala which showcases the contributions, achievements and artistic talents of the Tamil Canadian community is a reflection of Markham's rich multicultural society.

This evening is also a celebration of Thai Pongal, or Harvest Festival, observed in Canada and around the world and is a time to give thanks to nature and to celebrate peace, prosperity, happiness and harmony. Markham City Council is pleased to show our support for this important festival and have proclaimed January 13 to 15 as Thai Pongal and Tamil Heritage Days.

As Mayor, I am pleased to have this opportunity to extend our best wishes for a happy Pongal and for a very enjoyable evening.

Yours sincerely

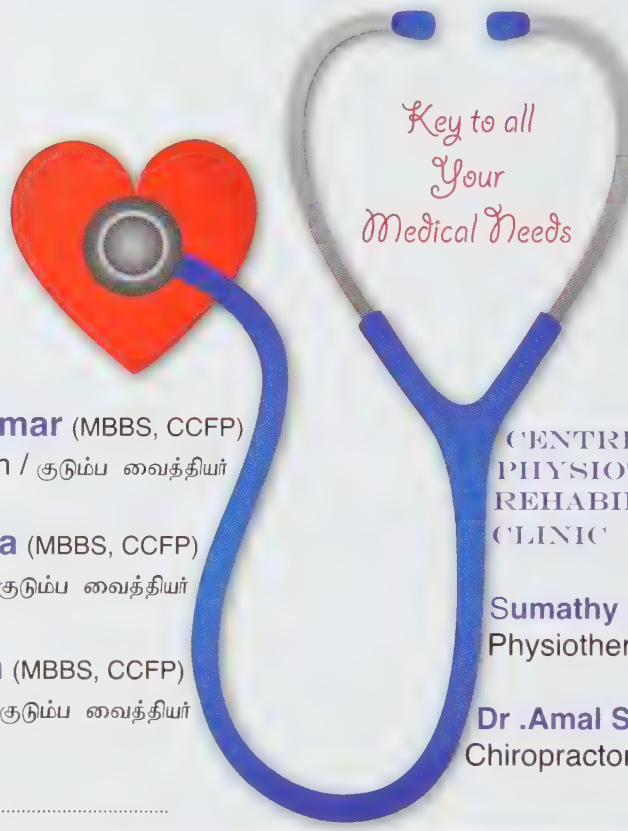
Frank Scarpitti

Frank Scarpitti
Mayor

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Dr. Sivaraji Vakeesan (MBBS, CCFP)
Family Physician/ / குடும்ப வைத்தியர்

CENTRE CITY PHYSIOTHERAPY AND REHABILITATION CLINIC

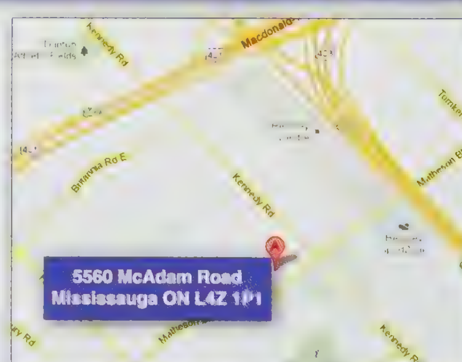
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Everyone should believe that life is worth living. That's not only our dream at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), it's the promise we're making to our community and beyond. CAMH serves more than 27,000 patients each year, - matching each person's journey to recovery with a range of innovative therapies. And we are home to more than 500,000 annual outpatient visits for a range of complex problems.

We're streamlining access to those services. We're harnessing the power of research and innovation. We're revolutionizing mental health education and driving social change, promoting compassion, understanding and the end of discrimination.

I am deeply grateful to the Canadian Tamil Congress for raising awareness about mental health and for supporting the vital work of CAMH through your 4th Annual Tamil Canadian Walk. The walk raised an astounding $46,000 for our hospital's highest priorities, including the Office of Transformative Global Health. This will help us to support capacity building initiatives in countries like Sri Lanka.

One in five Canadians will experience mental illness or addiction in their lifetime. Every family, every community and every workplace will feel the impact. Thank you for helping CAMH to be a beacon of hope around the world.

With partners like you, CAMH is unlocking enormous potential – offering hope to individuals and shaping a better future for all.

Thank you,

Catherine Zahn

Dr. Catherine Zahn
President and CEO
Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

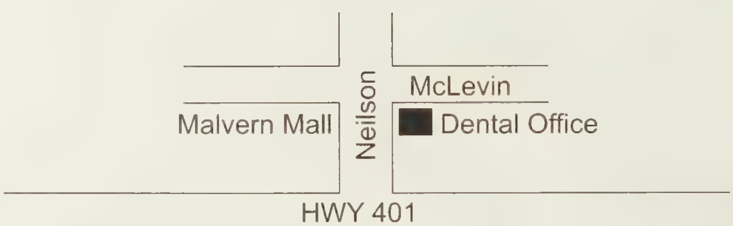
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Thai Pongal: A Celebration of Globalized Tamils

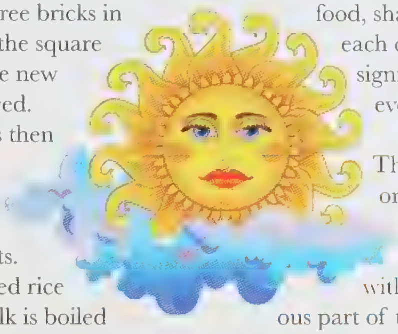
Sivan Ilangko



Thai Pongal is a harvest festival and is equivalent to Thanksgiving celebrations in North America. It is an inclusive festival celebrated by the Tamil population irrespective of religious faith. Prior to industrialization, in an agriculture-based civilization, farmers depended on their cattle, timely rain and the Sun for a bountiful harvest. Once a year, they celebrated Thai Pongal, to thank the nature, the sun and the farm animals for bringing prosperity to agriculture with plentiful harvests. Although the origin of Thai Pongal is not clearly known, it may well be more than 1000 years old.

Thai Pongal is celebrated on the first day of the month Thai (the first month of the Tamil Almanac). The day falls between January 12th and 15th in the Christian calendar. The date of Pongal often remains the same, as it is determined according to the solar calendar. The date is also viewed as an auspicious day as the Sun begins its journey northwards for a period of six months. That is where the Tamil saying, "Thai Piranthal Vali Pirakkum", stems from - the commencement of Thai paves the way for new opportunities and a way for love, peace, harmony, prosperity and joy in everyone's life.

In the Tamil language, Pongal means "boiling over" or "spillover". At the front of the house, a flat square pitch is made and decorated with kolam drawings made from rice flour. The square pitch is exposed to direct sunlight and defines the sacred area where the Pongal is prepared. A hearth made of natural firewood is set up using three bricks in the middle of the square pitch where the new clay pot is placed. The clay pot is then adorned with flowers, turmeric leaves and roots. Newly harvested rice with a little milk is boiled in the pot. Other ingredients of Pongal are chakkarai (brown sugar) or katkandu (sugar candy), milk (cow's milk or coconut milk), payaru (roasted green gram), raisins and cashew nuts.



While a senior member of the family cooks, the rest of the family members gather around the scared area and dutifully assists him or her. The climax is when the rice and milk reach the boiling point and the Pongal spills over the edges of the clay pot. The spill over of milk is a propitious symbol of abundance and good omen and is often accompanied by wishing each other with the delightful cry - "Pongal O'Pongal!"- we are getting exactly what we expect. As soon as the boiling is over, the cooked rice, the Pongal, is first offered to the sun god on banana leaves. The family prays and thanks the Sun, nature and farmers. The Pongal is then served with fruits among family and shared with relatives, friends and neighbours. Although every household makes the food, sharing the Pongal with each other is one of the most significant features of the event.

The Pongal festival was originally celebrated in India and Sri Lanka. It has now become global with Tamils residing in various part of the world and is celebrated by over 70 million people. The celebration has much in common with North American Thanksgiving and although the Pongal is in mid January, the celebration can last several days. ◆

Sivan Ilangko is a Chartered Accounant. He holds directorship at Centre for Leadership and Innovation and is Vice President of Canadian Tamils Chamber of Commerce



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CTC in Rewind - 2012

Update on Rohan Gunaratne Lawsuit
December 2012



In 2011, CTC filed a lawsuit against Rohan Gunaratne, for defamatory statements made against the organization. CTC took the first step to challenge the newspaper and Rohan Gunaratne himself legally to put a stop to any plan of discrediting or tarnishing the Tamil Diaspora. The lawsuit is in its final stages and CTC is hoping for a favourable decision from the court in early 2013.



Youth Leadership Program Celebrates the Completion of Another Successful Term!
December 15th, 2012– Scarborough Civic Centre

The Centre for Leadership and Innovation was registered as a non-profit and an affiliate organization of the Canadian Tamil Congress earlier this year. CFLI conducts Youth Leadership Programs among Tamil-Canadian youth and nurtures leadership, public speaking and communication skills through a structured and graduated process. On December 15th, 2012, they celebrated the successful completion of their second term. The Youth Leadership Program has become a popular program that has sparked a great amount of interest from youth and parents alike.

UN Internal Report on Sri Lanka: What is Next?
November 22nd, 2012 – Scarborough Civic Centre

Shortly after the release of the report of the Secretary General's Internal Review Panel on UN Action in Sri Lanka, CTC organized a panel discussion to discuss the next steps. Former BBC Correspondent and author of Still Counting the Dead, Frances Harrison, Norwegian journalist and director of Silenced Voices, Beate Arnested, Professor Cheran and CTC's legal counsel, Gary Anandasangaree paneled a discussion about the next steps needed to be taken by the Tamil Diaspora and international community as a whole.



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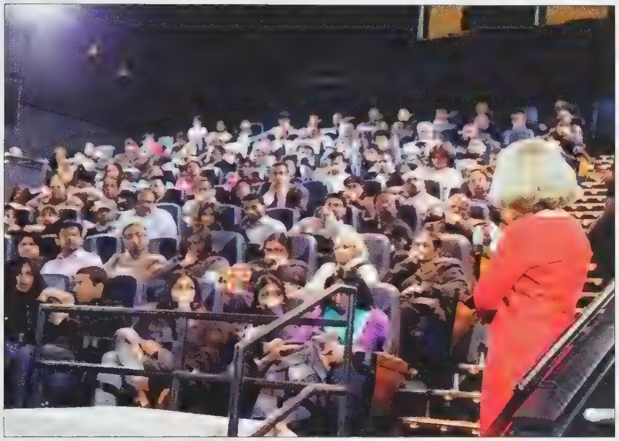


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Screening of Silenced Voices: Tales of Sri Lankan Journalists in Exile

November 19th, 2012 – Famous Players, Scarborough Town Center



CTC screened "Silenced Voices: Tales of Sri Lankan Journalists in Exile" to a full house audience at Scarborough Town Center's Famous Players theatre. Produced by award winning Norwegian director and journalist Beate Arnestad, the film is about freedom of speech and reporters who risk their lives to highlight the human rights violations that took place in their homeland. Through personal encounters with exiled journalists from Sri Lanka, Silenced Voices tells the heart wrenching stories of death, suffering and the constant threat to freedom of expression.

CTC Holds Press Conference on Parliament Hill to Welcome Highly Critical UN Report

November 15th, 2012 - Parliament Hill, Ottawa



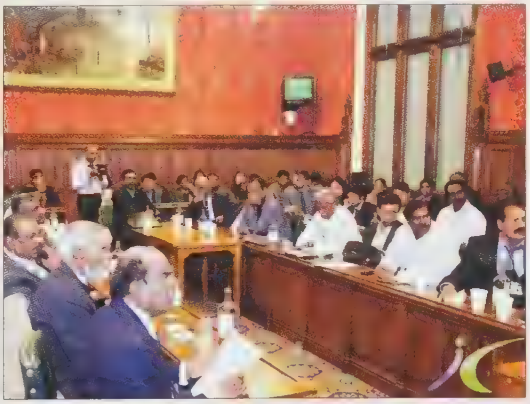
CTC organized a press conference in the Canadian Parliament after the release of the Secretary General's Internal Review Panel's report on UN Action in Sri Lanka. The report concluded that events in Sri Lanka marked a grave failure of the UN to adequately respond to early warnings. In his statement, CTC's legal counsel, Gary Anandasangaree welcomed the highly critical internal review of the UN and called upon the United Nations and its member states to convene an international independent investigation into allegations of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed in Sri Lanka.



CTC Participates in World Tamil Conference in London

November 6-9, 2012 – London, United Kingdom

CTC's Thushyanthan Thurairatnam participated in the World Tamil Conference held in the British House of Parliament in London. Leaders and senior party members of Tamil Nadu political parties, Parliamentarians of the Tamil National Alliance, and members of Tamil Civil Society and Tamil Diaspora organizations participated in this conference. Several UK parliamentarians, human rights activists and journalists also attended the conference. A resolution calling for international independent investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity was unanimously passed.



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Sri Lanka Reviewed by Peers during UN Universal Periodic Review

November 1st, 2012 - United Nations, Geneva

The United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) reviewed Sri Lanka's human rights record as part of its Universal Periodic Review. After submitting written submissions on Sri Lanka's human rights record to the UPR panel, representatives of the Canadian Tamil Congress attended the three-hour review of Sri Lanka in Geneva. Much like its National Report, the content of Sri Lanka's oral statements illustrated a lack of progress towards implementing recommendations made by its peer states in 2008. Of 26 voluntary commitments made in 2008, Sri Lanka has fulfilled just 2 and of 45 accepted recommendations, only 5 have been implemented thus far.

Tamil Canadians Walked to Raise over $46,000 for CAMH

September 16th, 2012 – Thomson Memorial Park, Scarborough



Thousands of Tamil Canadians and friends joined the 2012 Tamil Canadian walk-a-thon in support of Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). CAMH is Canada's largest mental health and addiction teaching hospital and is also known for its work globally on mental health initiatives, providing clinical training and education in several countries including Nigeria, Brazil, Mexico, China, India and Sri Lanka.



Hundreds of supporters including youth groups, seniors groups, families and circles of friends, joined at Thomson Memorial Park, in Scarborough, for a 5 km walk. The proceeds from the event will benefit CAMH's highest priorities including the Office of Transformative Global Health, which will be supporting a capacity building training initiative in Sri Lanka.

CTC's Intervention Accepted by the Supreme Court of Canada

October 18th, 2012 – SCC, Ottawa



CTC intervened in Agraira v. Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, an appeal at the SCC concerning the application of s. 34 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA). CTC's counsel, Ms. Barbara Jackman and Mr. Hadayt Nazami, argued that the Minister's discretion under s. 34(2) of IRPA should be broadened to ensure that people who do not present a security threat to Canada are permitted to regularize their status. CTC remains deeply concerned about the outcome of the appeal to the SCC as it will have a direct impact on Tamil refugee claimants in Canada.

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CTC Remembers Black July '83

July 23rd, 2012 – Scarborough Civic Centre



29 years later, we still remember. As part of the Black July Remembrance day, Canadian Tamil Congress organized a meeting to analyze the impact of the Sri Lankan government's land grab atrocities. These atrocities in Sri Lanka have caused extreme hardship and continue to breach the basic human rights of the Tamil community. Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice Founder and Federal NDP Member of Parliament, Prof. Craig Scott, Windsor University Prof. Cheran and Tamil National Alliance Canada President, Mr. Nakkeeran Thangavelu discussed the impact of land grab issues and participated in an interactive dialogue with the audience.

CTC Joins FeTNA in Baltimore and sends a Delegation to the 25th Annual Conference

July 6-7th, 2012 – Baltimore, Maryland



In an ongoing effort to strengthen the ties with Tamils from South India and other parts of the world, CTC became a member of the Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA) in early 2010. FeTNA is a non-profit, literary, educational, cultural, charitable, secular and non-partisan organization bringing together over 40 prominent Tamil organizations across North America. CTC members attended the conference, which was packed with programs and break away sessions with a focus on promoting the Tamil language, identity and culture. CTC is honored to be chosen to host the 2013 FeTNA convention from July 5-7th, 2013 in Toronto.

Tamil Canadian Community Marches in Canada Day Parade

July 1st, 2012 – Milne Park, Markham & Birunthan Park, Scarborough

Tamil Canadians celebrated Canada's 145th Birthday with hundreds of fellow Canadians. Waving Canadian flags, community members proudly walked in two parades. CTC took part in the Tamil Canadian float at Scarborough's 25th Annual Canada Day Parade, which arrived at Birunthan Park for activities and performances. In Markham, CTC once again joined the Canada Day Parade filled with colourful floats, various games and activities for children and an eventful night full of music and dancing.






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CTC's 5th Annual Blood Donation Drive

July 2012



The Canadian Tamil Congress, for the fifth year in row, partnered with Canadian Blood Services to host a blood donation drive with several clinics open throughout the month. Tamil Canadians were urged to be donors for a very worthy cause under group name Tamil Canadians and group ID code CANA009345. Through the bloodshed of our loved ones during Sri Lanka's civil war, CTC recognizes the dire need of such services and encourages Tamil Canadians to give back to our Canadian community.

CTC Announces CAMH as Recipient of 4th Annual Walk

May 26th, 2012 – Scarborough Civic Centre

During the official launch, CTC announced the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) as the chosen recipient for the 2012 Tamil Canadian Walk-a-Thon. Members of the Tamil Canadian community engaged in an open dialogue regarding mental health and addiction issues in the community. 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime and the remaining 4 will have a friend, family member or colleague who will. Only one-third of those who need mental health services in Canada actually receive them. In support of CAMH, Tamil Canadians announced that they would come together to walk in solidarity in support of those who suffer from various forms of addiction and mental health issues.

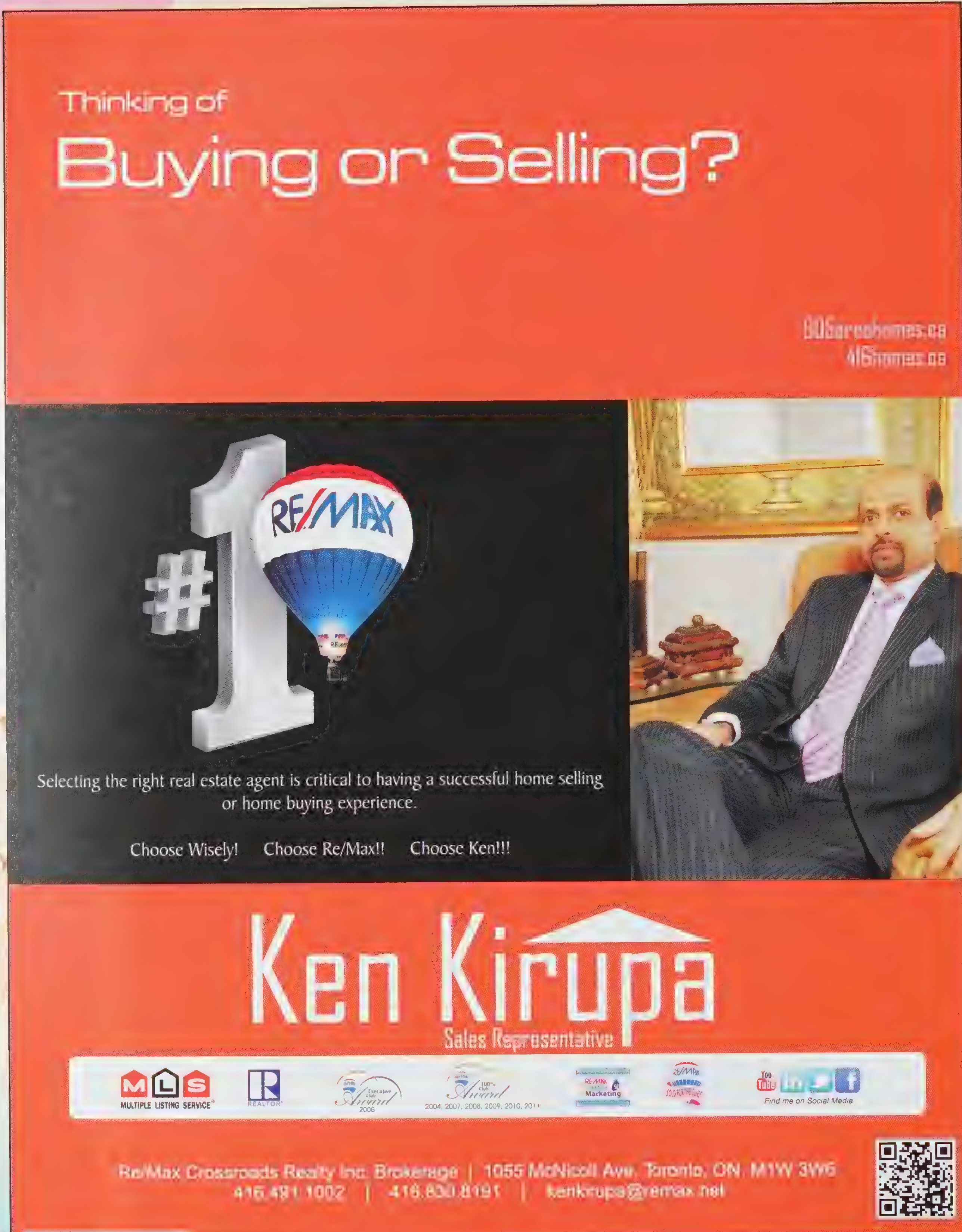


CTC Plants Hundreds of Trees in Remembrance

May 5th, 2012 – Bob Hunter Memorial Park, Markham



With shovels and buckets in hand, Tamil Canadians, friends and neighbours came together in an initiative to help reforest and preserve Canada's natural heritage. Given the significance that the month of May plays in the hearts of many Tamil Canadians, CTC joined the David Suzuki Foundation and successfully planted hundreds of trees. The planting of trees has long been considered a traditional means of preserving and restoring the environment and for the Tamil community, the tree is a deeply symbolic and much treasured living emblem of continuance. While enriching and preserving the environment, the event was significant to Tamil Canadians who planted trees in memory of their loved ones who perished in Sri Lanka.



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Youth Leadership Program Launch

April 28th, 2012 – Canadian Tamil Congress





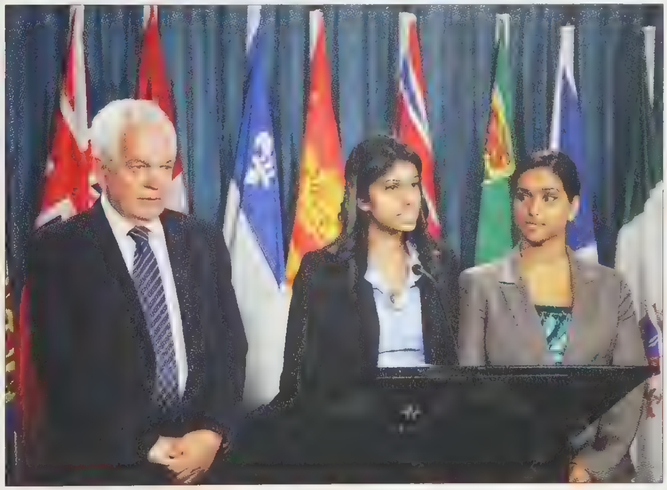
Merely a few months after making the initial announcement during CTC's 5th Annual Thai Pongal Dinner, over a hundred people gathered to launch the Youth Leadership Program organized by the Centre for Leadership and Innovation, an initiative of the Canadian Tamil Congress. The program, conducted in partnership with Ottawa based U-Learn-to-Talk Club, is aimed at helping youth improve their public speaking, team building and volunteering skills. An energetic crowd of kids, parents, politicians and well wishers cheered and encouraged 20 new members of the pilot program. Ontario Minister of Economic Development and Innovation, Hon. Brad Duguid, MP for Scarborough Rouge River Rathika Sitsabaieasan and Toronto Board of Education Trustee Shaun Chen honoured the launch as special guests.

"War Crimes Unpunished" Screened on Parliament Hill

April 24th, 2012 – Parliament Hill, Ottawa



Prompted by "War Crimes Unpunished", the sequel to Channel 4's frank and heartbreaking broadcast, "Sri Lanka's Killing Fields", the Canadian Tamil Congress organized a press conference and screening on Parliament Hill. Elected members of parliament and community members were left speechless after witnessing horrific footage of atrocities committed during Sri Lanka's civil war. The documentary cast real doubt on whether victims will ever see real justice after showcasing the role that high ranking officials played in the horror that brought havoc to Sri Lanka. CTC was instrumental in organizing this



screening and press conference in the Canadian Parliament, together with Members of Parliament, Judy Sgro, Patrick Brown and Craig Scott.

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CTC Advocacy Team at the UN Human Rights Council

February 27th – March 23rd, 2012 – United Nations, Geneva

On behalf of Lawyers Rights Watch Canada (LRWC), Gary Anandasangaree and Vani Selvarajah addressed the UN Human Rights Council during its 19th session in Geneva. Statements delivered to the Council repeatedly urged the United Nations and its member states to call for independent, international investigation into allegations of human rights violations in Sri Lanka. The advocacy team lobbied various governments and groups at the UN to advocate for the passage of the Resolution on Accountability in Sri Lanka that passed on March 22nd, 2012. LRWC has been actively involved in UN lobbying and advocacy efforts on the international level. In 2012, the team participated in all sessions of the HRC in March, June and September.

CTC Hosts 5th Annual Thai Pongal Dinner

January 21st, 2012

The chief guest of the evening, Mr. M.A. Sumanthiran, MP for the Tamil National Alliance in Sri Lanka addressed a packed hall of approximately 1,000 guests. At this marquee sold-out event, hundreds of community members, friends from partner organizations and politicians joined CTC in honoring two inspiring Canadians with community awards. For his timely actions that saved 155 lives, Newfoundland sea Captain Gus Dalton of the Atlantic Reaper was awarded the Leaders for Change award for his heroic efforts. The Late Hon. Jack Layton was honoured with the Service Excellence award for his support of new Canadians, lifelong work to better the lives of the marginalized and his commitment to social justice. His son, Councilor Mike Layton accepted the award on his behalf.







CTC Continues to Work on Community Center Project

The Canadian Tamil Congress, during the 5th Annual Gala in January 2012, announced its plans to work on a Community Center for Tamils in Toronto. Since the announcement, CTC has formed committees who have been discussing the plans in more detail. CTC hopes to launch its fundraising campaign in 2013 so the Community Center project could take its next steps.

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Service Excellence Award

As part of our ongoing commitment to volunteerism and promoting community involvement, the Canadian Tamil Congress will honour the contribution of an individual or organization that has supported the Tamil people. The recipient of this award will be an organization, which has demonstrated compassion, dedication and support to community-building efforts. This award will recognize the organization's long-term support, commitment and significant contribution to the Tamil community at large.

Award Recipient:
Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace & Justice

The Sri Lankan Campaign for Peace & Justice is a multi-ethnic, non-partisan group that campaigns for a just and lasting peace in Sri Lanka based upon accountability and respect for human rights. The Sri Lanka Campaign was launched with the objective of calling for effective humanitarian relief for war survivors, an end to human rights violations and a lasting peace based on the rule of law and respect for all communities in the country.

The Sri Lanka Campaign has been extremely active and effective in their advocacy campaign. The organization, run by an exceptionally talented group of people, campaign across the world, at every level, to draw attention to the human rights violations in Sri Lanka. By reacting to issues in an effective, creative and timely manner, the Sri Lanka Campaign is aimed at creating a situation where civilians can look forward to a future with justice, rights and reconciliation.

While members of the organization are not affiliated with any political or ethnic group inside or outside of Sri Lanka, they exist to fight for the rights of all those living in Sri Lanka. Sustaining this highly effective organization depends on the support and generosity of members of the public.

These remarkable individuals work tirelessly towards ensuring the protection of human rights on a volunteer basis despite their extremely full and busy lives. They deserve our utmost respect and continued support for their selfless dedication towards lasting peace for the people of Sri Lanka and worldwide.

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Canadian Tamil Congress

Leaders for Change Award



This award honours the unique contribution of an individual who through his or her exceptional vision, perseverance and commitment has redefined or strengthened the need for change in our society. The recipient of this award will be someone who has demonstrated an effort to strive for change in a way that positively impacted the lives of others. This award recognizes a determined individual whose efforts are characterized by a dedication to leadership, a vision for change and a desire to enhance the lives of others.

Award Recipient:
William Blair
Chief of Police

Chief William Blair started his career with the Toronto Police over 30 years ago and was appointed Chief of the Toronto Police Service in April 26, 2005. Amongst his many achievements and continued, dedicated service to the people of Toronto, Chief Blair has led the development of the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) to combat violent crime. Always devoted to public service, Chief Blair serves on several committees and community organizations, and remains an inspiration to all Canadians.

To Tamil Canadians, Chief Blair is a dear friend who has supported us through the 2009 demonstrations, an especially difficult time. Chief Blair expressed his empathy and handled this very emotional and dire situation with exemplary leadership - exhibiting community policing at its best. He ensured the protection of the right to protest and ensured that essential services were available to those who were demonstrating. Chief Blair was lauded by many in the community for truly understanding the sentiments of our community and engaging with us as we pleaded for the thousands of perished lives.

Chief William Blair has dedicated his life to an incredible display of leadership and devotion to the betterment of the Canadian community. We, as Canadians, are proud to have such an individual in our midst and look forward to celebrating his continued achievements. ◆


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Living Hero Award



As part of our commitment to recognizing the work of heroic individuals for their selfless work in bettering the lives of others, the Canadian Tamil Congress has introduced the Living Hero Award. The award will be given annually to a person of Tamil origin who has demonstrated exemplary leadership, courage, empathy and services in challenging circumstances. The Living Hero Award will recognize the contribution of a dedicated individual whose selfless work has helped change the lives of others.

Award Recipient: "The Doctor"

The recipient of CTC's first Living Hero award is "The Doctor". The Doctor, is a chapter in the book entitled "Still Counting the Dead: Survivors of Sri Lanka's Hidden War" by former BBC correspondent and author, Frances Harrison. In this heart wrenching chapter, she tells the story of a brave doctor who not only survived Sri Lanka's brutal war but was also instrumental in saving the lives of thousands of people. Author Frances Harrison describes in painstaking detail how the Doctor selflessly put his own life in harm's way to save the lives of thousands of war wounded Tamil people. The Doctor's name has not been released for fear of persecution and reprisal against his family members still living in Sri Lanka.

The Doctor was one of the last health care workers to come out alive from the war zone in May 2009. Fortunately, he was not captured nor identified as a doctor by the Sri Lankan authorities and managed to escape Sri Lanka. The Doctor, physically and mentally wounded, is currently living in exile with his wife and children and is trying to get past the trauma and horrific memories that have now become a part of him.

CTC honours the Doctor's selfless work and salutes him for his courage, compassion and commitment to his fellow people in challenging and dangerous circumstances. Recognized for championing the quality of life for the people he served and the way he embraced his conviction to uphold his duties not only as a doctor, but also as a fellow human being, the Doctor has become a living hero in the eyes of many Tamil Canadians. ◆

புதுவருட

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Greetings and Best Wishes

on the occasion of the

Thai Pongal Celebration

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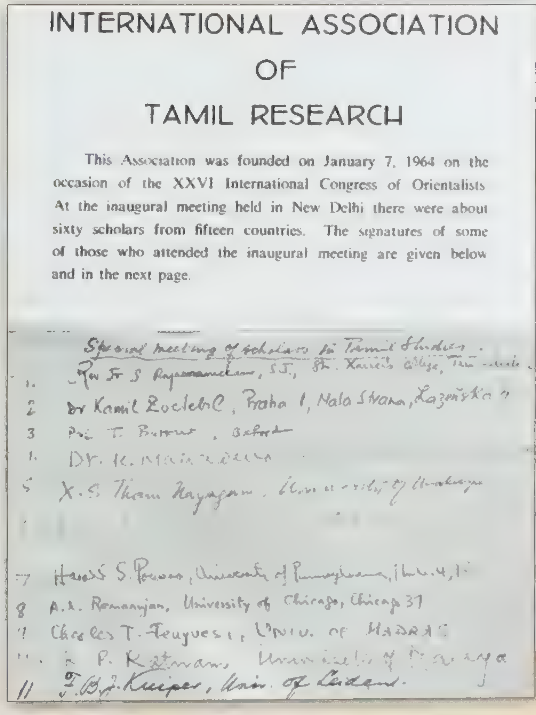
Karuna Eugine Vincent

இன்றைக்கு தொன்மையும் வளமும் வனப்பும் இணைந்த ஒரு மொழியைப் பேசுபவர்களாக நாம் இருக்கிறோம். தோண்டத் தோண்டத் திகட்டாத தேன்சுவையைக் கொட்டித்தரும் தொன்மை தமிழுக்கு உண்டு. தமிழுடன் தோன்றிய பல மொழிகள் அழிந்துபோனாலும் நவீனத்தைக் குழைத்து இற்றைவரைக்கும் இளமையாய் வாழ்ந்துவருவது அதன் சிறப்பு. பல்லாயிரம் ஆண்டுகளாகத் தொடரும் தமிழ் மொழியின் சிறப்புக்கு வளம் சேர்த்த ஏராளமானோர் இருக்கிறார்கள். இவர்களின் ஒப்பற்ற உழைப்பாலும் அர்ப்பணிப்பாலுமே தமிழ் மொழி தொன்மையும் நவீனமும் ஒருங்கே அமைந்ததாய் வாழ்ந்துகொண்டிருக்கிறது. அந்தவகையில் தமிழ்மொழியின் பெருமையை உலகளாவிய வகையில் பறைசாற்றிய ஒருவர் அருட்திரு. சேவியர் தனிநாயகம் அடிகளார். தமிழை உலகமெலாம் பரவும்வகை செய்து ஈழத்தமிழினத்துக்கே பெருமை சேர்த்தவர் தனிநாயக அடிகள்.

சேவியர் தனிநாயகம் அடிகளார் 1913ம் ஆண்டு ஓகஸ்ட் 2ம் நாள் ஊர்காவற்றுறையிலே பிறந்தார். இவரின் இயற்பெயர் நாகநாதன். நாகநாதன் கிறிஸ்தவ சமயத்தைத் தழுவியபோது ஏற்றுக்கொண்ட பெயர் சேவியர் ஸ்ரனிஸ்லோஸ். இவர் தனது ஆரம்பக் கல்வியை காவலூர் புனித அந்தோனியார் கல்லூரியிலும் இடைநிலைக்கல்வியை சம்பத்திரிசியார் கல்லூரியிலும் (1920 – 1922) கற்றார். பின்னர் கத்தோலிக்க குருவாக விரும்பி கொழும்பு புனித பேர்னாட் குருமடத்தில் இணைந்து (1934) மெய்யியல் துறையில் தனது இளங்கலைப் பட்டத்தைப் பெற்றார். தொடர்ந்து உரோம் வத்திக்கான் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில் மெய்யியலில்



முனைவர் பட்டத்தைப் பெற்றார். ஐரோப்பாவில் இருந்தபோதே ஆங்கிலத்துடன் இலத்தீன், இத்தாலிய,பிரெஞ்சு, ஜேர்மனிய, ஸ்பானிய, போர்த்துக்கேய மொழிகளில் புலமை பெற்றவராக விளங்கினார்.



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TAMIL RESEARCH

This Association was founded on January 7, 1964 on the occasion of the XXVI International Congress of Orientalists At the inaugural meeting held in New Delhi there were about sixty scholars from fifteen countries. The signatures of some of those who attended the inaugural meeting are given below and in the next page.

Special meeting of scholars in Tamil Studies.

1. Rev Fr S Rajamanickam, S.J., St. Xavier's College, [illegible]
2. Dr Kamil Zvelebil, Praha 1, Mala Strana, [illegible]
3. Prof T. Burrow, Oxford
4. Dr. K. [illegible]
5. X. S. Thani Nayagam, University of [illegible]
7. Harold S. [illegible], University of Pennsylvania, [illegible]
8. A. K. Ramanujan, University of Chicago, Chicago 31
9. Charles T. [illegible], Univ. of Madras
10. [illegible] P. [illegible], University of [illegible]
11. F. B. J. Kuiper, Univ. of Leiden.

அதன் பின்னர் தமிழ் நாட்டில் நெல்லை மாவட்டத்தில் உள்ள வடக்கன்குளம் புனித தெரேசா உயர்நிலைப்பள்ளியில் துணைத் தலைமையாசிரியராகப் பணியாற்றினார். இலங்கையில் கற்றபோதும் தமிழ் பயிலும் வாய்ப்பு இலங்கையில் அவருக்கு வாய்க்கப்பெறவில்லை. வடக்கன்குளத்தில் இருந்தபோதே பண்டிதர் குருசாமி சுப்பிரமணிய ஐயர் என்பவரிடம் தமிழ் பயில ஆரம்பித்தார். 1945இல் தமிழ்நாட்டில் அண்ணாமலைப் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில் சங்க இலக்கியத்தை ஆய்வு செய்து "தமிழ்ப்பாடல்களில் இயற்கை" என்ற ஆய்வுக் கட்டுரையை சமர்ப்பித்து முதுமாணிப் பட்டம் பெற்றார்.

தமிழ் மொழிக்கான ஆய்வுகள் அதிகமில்லாத அந்நாட்களில் தமிழ் மொழிக்கான ஆய்வு அமைப்பு ஒன்றை உருவாக்கும் ஆர்வம் கொண்டு தனிநாயக அடிகள் உழைத்து வந்தார். ஜப்பான், சிலி, பிரேசில், பெரு, மெக்சிக்கோ, அமெரிக்கா ஆகியநாடுகளுக்கு மொழியியல் ஆய்வு தொடர்பாகப் பயணித்தார். தமது பயணத்தின் போது ஐரோப்பிய நூலகங்களில் உள்ள பழந்தமிழ் நூல்களைக் கண்டறிந்தார். இவற்றில் "கார்த்தீயா" (1556), "தம்பிரான் வணக்கம்" (1578), "கிறித்தியானி வணக்கம்" (1579), ஆன்டம் டி புரொசென்கா என்பவரால் தொகுக்கப்பட்ட முதலாவது "தமிழ்–போர்த்துக்கீச அகராதி" ஆகியவை குறிப்பிடத்தக்கவை ஆகும். அமெரிக்கப் பல்கலைக்கழகங்களில் ஏனைய மொழிகளுக்காக

Continued on page 45

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நடைபெறும் ஆய்வுகளைக் கண்டு தமிழுக்கும் இவ்வாறான ஆய்வுகள் தேவை எனக் கூறினார். தமிழ் குறித்த செய்திகளை ஆங்கிலத்தில் வெளிக்கொணர்ந்தால்தான் தமிழின் பெருமையை ஏனைய சமூகத்தவர் உணர்ந்துகொள்வார்கள் என்பதற்காய் Tamil Culture என்ற சஞ்சிகையை ஆரம்பித்து அதன் ஆசிரியராகவும் பணியாற்றினார்.

பின்னர் இலங்கைப் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில் தமிழ் விரிவுரையாளராகப் பணியாற்றினார். 1961 இல் மலேசியா சென்று மலேயாப் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில் 1969 வரை இந்தியக் கல்வியாய்வுகள் துறையிலே தலைமைப் பேராசிரியராகப் பணிபுரிந்தார். மலேசியாவில் பணிபுரியும் காலத்தில் புதுடெல்லியில் வ. ஐ. சுப்பிரமணியத்துடனும் இன்னும் இருபத்தாறு அறிஞர்களுடனும் இணைந்து உலகத் தமிழாராய்ச்சி நிறுவனத்தை தோற்றுவித்தார். இந்நிறுவனம், உலகில் பல்வேறு நாடுகளில் பணியாற்றிவரும் தமிழறிஞர்களை ஒருங்கிணைத்து தமிழ் ஆராய்ச்சியை ஒருமுகப்படுத்தவும், வளப்படுத்தவும் தமிழாராய்ச்சி மாநாடொன்றினை இரண்டாண்டுகளுக்கு ஒருமுறை நடத்த வேண்டுமென்று வரையறுத்துக் கொண்டது. அதன் முதல் மாநாட்டினை 1966 ஏப்ரல் 16 – 23ம் நாட்களில் மலேசிய அரசின் துணையோடு பிரமாண்டமான முறையில் மலேசியத் தலைநகர் கோலாலம்பூரில் தனிநாயக அடிகள் நடத்தினார். புரொயென்காவின் போர்த்துக்கீச–தமிழ் அகராதியை அங்கு மீள்பதிவாக்கம் செய்து இம்மாநாட்டில் வெளியிட்டார். சென்னையில் நடந்த இரண்டாவது உலகத் தமிழாராய்ச்சி மாநாட்டில் முதன்மை விருந்தினராகக் கலந்து கொண்டார்.



From left: Professor T. Burrow, Professor Xavier S. Thani Nayagam, Dr. K. Mahadeva Shastri, Pandit K. P. Ratnam and Professor F. B. J. Kuiper.

1970இல் மூன்றாவது தமிழாராய்ச்சி மாநாடு பாரிசிலும் 1974 இல் நான்காவது தமிழாராய்ச்சி மாநாடு யாழ்ப்பாணத்திலும் அடிகளாரின் முயற்சியால் நடைபெற்றன.

யாழ்ப்பாணத்தில் நடைபெற்ற தமிழாராய்ச்சி மாநாட்டினையொட்டி யாழ் நகரமே விழாக்கோலம் பூண்டது. இது சிங்கள அரசுக்கு பெரும் எரிச்சலை ஏற்படுத்தியிருக்க வேண்டும். மாநாட்டின் இறுதி நாளில் பொலிசாரின் துப்பாக்கிச்சூட்டில் 10 தமிழர்கள் பலியானார்கள். ஈழத்தமிழர் போராட்ட வரலாற்றில் இது பெரும் திருப்புமுனையாக அமைந்தது.

அடிகளார் “தமிழ்த் தூது”, “உலகப் பயணங்களின் பட்டறிவு”, “ஒன்றே உலகம்” அடங்கலாக மொத்தம் 137 நூல்களை எழுதினார். அண்ணாமலைப் பல்கலைக்கழகத்தில் அடிகளார் ஆற்றிய உரை திருவள்ளுவர் என்னும் பெயரில் நூலாகியுள்ளது.

அடிகளார் இறப்பதற்கு நான்கு மாதத்திற்கு முன்னர் ஏப்ரல் 1980 இல் தந்தை செல்வா நினைவுப் பேருரையை கொழும்பில் நிகழ்த்தினார். அதே ஆண்டு மே மாதம் வேலணையில் பண்டிதர் கா. பொ. இரத்தினம் அவர்கள் எழுதிய தமிழ்மறைவிருந்து என்ற நூல் வெளியீட்டு விழாவிலும் பங்கேற்றார். அதன்பின், பெரிதும் உடல் நலிவுற்ற தனிநாயகம் அடிகளார், 1980 செப்டம்பர் 1 மாலை 6.30 மணியளவில் உமிர் நீத்தார்.

1981 இல் மதுரையில் நடைபெற்ற ஐந்தாவது உலகத் தமிழாராய்ச்சி மாநாட்டில் அடிகளாரின் மறைவுக்கு இரங்கல் தெரிவிக்கப்பட்டது. இவரின் மறைவுக்குப் பின்னர் யாழ்ப்பாணப் பல்கலைக்கழகம் இவருக்கு கலாநிதி பட்டம் வழங்கிச் சிறப்பித்தது. தனது சேவையால் தமிழ் மொழிக்கு வளம் சேர்த்த தனிநாயக அடிகளார் பிறந்த நூறாவது ஆண்டு இவ்வாண்டாகும். ◆

தனிநாயக அடிகள் விவரணப் படம்

தனிநாயக அடிகளின் நூற்றாண்டை சிறப்பிக்கும் வகையில் வட அமெரிக்கத் தமிழ்ச் சங்கப் பேரவையும் கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவையும் இணைந்து நடத்தும் தமிழ் விழாவில் (FeTNA 2013) சிறப்பு விவரணப் படம் ஒன்றை தயாரித்து வெளியிடுவதற்கான முயற்சிகளை கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவை மேற்கொண்டு வருகிறது. அடிகளார் பற்றிய தகவல்கள் அல்லது ஆவணங்கள் உங்களிடம் இருந்தால் கனடியத் தமிழர் பேரவையைத் தொடர்பு கொள்ளுங்கள். தமிழ் மொழிக்காக வாழ்ந்த ஒரு பெருமகனின் வரலாறு ஆவணமாவதில் உங்களையும் இணைத்துக் கொள்ளுங்கள். தமிழ் மொழிக்காக நீங்கள் ஆற்றும் ஒரு பெரும் பணியாக அது அமையும்.

Karuna Eugine Vincenrt is a designer, artist, and a professional photographer. His paintings have been exhibited in Toronto and Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

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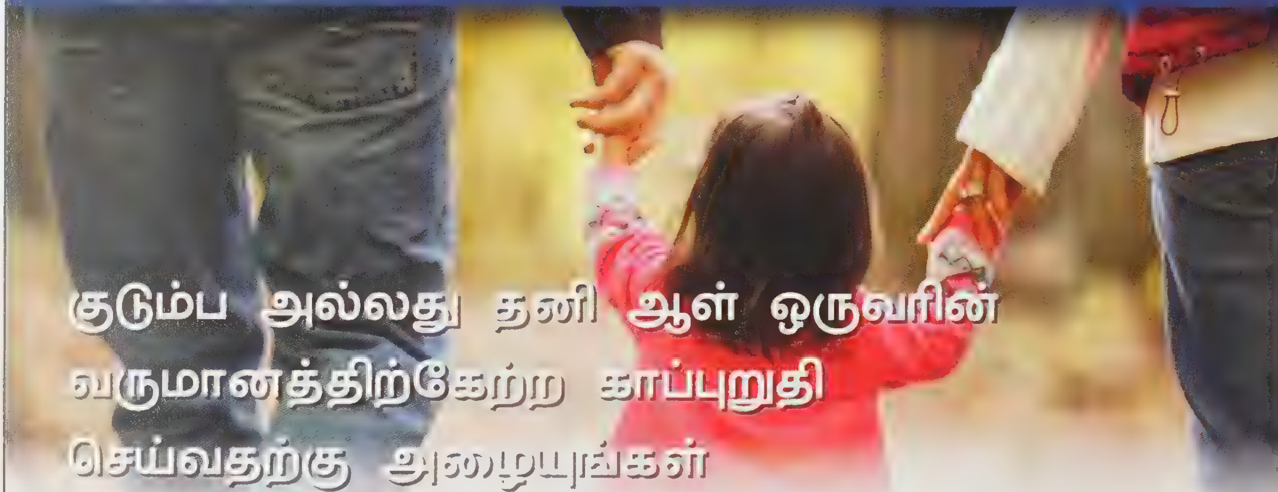
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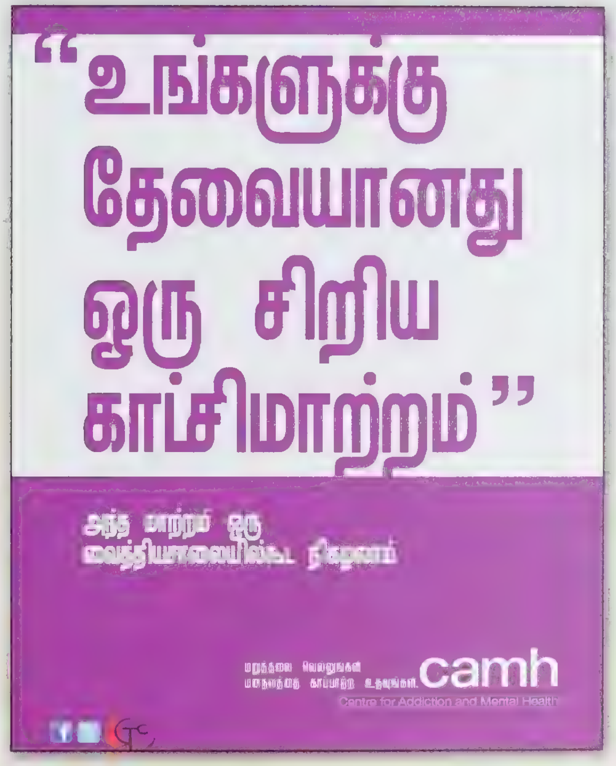
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Every year more than 25,000 people turn to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) for help. Some are facing their first experience of psychosis, others are in the grips of an addiction, and still more come to CAMH as part of their regular health-care routine. That's because CAMH is Canada's largest hospital specializing in mental health and addiction treatment.

Ten years ago visionary leaders from our hospital, government, business and the community set about building a new kind of hospital – the world's first "urban village" model of psychiatric care. As new buildings went up, new attitudes emerged.

People outside of CAMH's walls began to recognize that there is no health without mental health. And that CAMH's dream – that everyone believe that life is worth living – is not simply an issue of healthcare reform, but of social justice and equality as well. More than a dream, this is CAMH's promise.

Many hands make quick work
With the support of donors, CAMH has grown to be a world leader in mental health care and research – a beacon of hope for people around the world. And, with depression alone set to become the single biggest medical burden on health by 2020, there isn't a minute to spare.



The community, CAMH Foundation donors, supports hospital priorities that are not covered by increasingly shrinking government funding sources. Your dollars help fund our hospital's delivery of world-class care, innovative research, and progressive policy and educational initiatives.

Not everyone can give a six figure gift, but we can all make an impact. Fundraising events hosted by the public, like the 4th Annual Tamil Canadian Walk, offer vital financial support to CAMH. They're also very effective in building awareness and breaking down stigma – making it possible for more people to get help and get better.

Healing spaces
Donor support is creating a renewed and vibrant CAMH. Our Queen Street West campus now boasts new facilities whose modern, flexible spaces allow for the best patient care. At the Intergenerational Wellness Centre, children, youth and seniors receive the specialized care and intensive support they need to get better.

With the opening of Canada's only inpatient unit and day hospital, CAMH's Child, Youth & Family Program is now able to address one of the most urgent unmet needs of youth and their families – treating teens whose mental illness may be masked or made worse by harmful, addictive behaviours. In the same building, the Geriatric Mental Health Program offers specialized treatment and follow-up for seniors with addiction and mental illness, whose condition is often complicated by age-related physical health issues and dementia. With 48 new inpatient beds, outpatient services, and day

Continued on page 52

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treatment for seniors with complex mental health issues – CAMH is stepping up to champion geriatric metal health care.

Igniting discovery

CAMH's visionary scientists are fortunate to have the support of visionary donors. At the Campbell Family Mental Health Research Institute, made possible by donor support, CAMH scientists are pushing the boundaries of our understanding of the brain to reveal causes of mental illness and addictions; to improve prevention, treatment and management; and to understand societal and cultural factors to drive research, policy and social change.

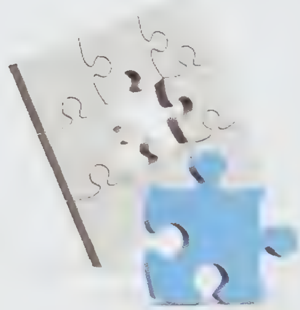
New treatment options with fewer side-effects are already being designed and perfected at the Temerty Centre for Therapeutic Brain Intervention. At the same time, scientists at the Tanenbaum Centre for Pharmacogenetics are working to identify new genetic markers and develop tests to predict a patient's response to medication. Their efforts will help eliminate trial-and-error prescribing – reducing dangerous side-effects and saving the health-care system millions of dollars in unnecessary costs.

Knowledge sharing and capacity building

A key component of CAMH's vision is to revolutionize education and knowledge exchange. We're developing into a true mental health learning organization; where teaching and learning permeate all aspects of our work. We know that with deeper awareness of mental illness comes deeper understanding, acceptance and a willingness to help. That's why in addition to training tomorrow's mental health experts we're also educating patients, families and the general public.

There's a world outside our walls that also deserves access to equally good mental health care and support. To meet this challenge, CAMH is building new health-promoting, primary health care networks with institutions in low-resourced countries in South Asia, including Sri Lanka, Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, as well as with communities in Ontario. ◆

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Professor Joseph Chandrakanthan



Some Realistic Challenges to Inter-Ethic Reconciliation in Sri Lanka

"Canada again calls on the government of Sri Lanka to live up to the standard of membership in the Commonwealth and show tangible progress on a process of national political reconciliation and to seriously address allegations of human rights violations by both sides during the civil war..." The Canadian Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Hon. Jason Kenney during his recent visit to the island nation, stated this in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka's Sinhala Minister for External Affairs, G.L. Peiris retorted that the Canadian Minister is "biased and unbalanced" and that " Sri Lanka must be given the time and space to address the post conflict issues, given the complexity of the domestic process including the need for wide consultations with political parties on the issue of devolution."

It is important to understand the Sinhala Minister's mindset and the extremist Sinhala-Buddhist government think-tank he represents, before we try to understand what Peiris has said. Peiris was one of the members of the junta that shared the anti-Tamil war room together with the pack of hardline Sinhala academics/ diplomats as Palitha Kohona, Rohan Gunaratna, Dayan Jayatilleke, Minister Mervin de Silva, and Prof. Nalin de Silva et al. Some of these men serve as policy makers and interpreters of the Sinhala constitution to those who wield today power in the totalitarian regime in Sri Lanka.

From 1990-1993, I was elected President of the University of Jaffna Teachers Association and I travelled to Colombo several times to be present at the numerous meetings of the Federation of University Teachers' Associations (FUTA) that took place in the Board Room of the Ministry of Higher Education in Ward Place, Colombo. Prof. Nalin de Silva was the chairman of FUTA. What is commendable about Nalin is that he does not hide his ethno-religious and militant extremism and is very open and candid about it. He also openly advocates that he is in full support of the Sinhala government's unwritten policy of annihilation or assimilation of the Tamil nationality into the one indivisible Sinhala Buddhist state. His only accusation is that the Sinhala government is not completing this process fast enough.

During those visits to Colombo I had met with G. L. Peiris only once in his office at the University of Colombo when he was Vice-Chancellor. In that private meeting which lasted for less than 35 minutes, it did not take me much time to conclude that Peiris had no qualms in preaching the same philosophy of the land, race (Sinhalese) and faith (Buddhism), as advocated by his university colleague Nalin de Silva. Herein lies the impossibility of any form of meaningful or over-arching reconciliation between the two communities. Tamils and Sinhalese who have shared this island for the past two millennia. It is therefore not surprising that G. L. Peiris chose to ridicule the statement by the Canadian Minster as biased and unbalanced. He is also sincere in saying that his Sinhala government needs "time and space." Time in order to complete the process annihilation/ assimilation of the Tamil nationality which is happening at an accelerated speed with the help of over two hundred thousand Sinhala military personnel stationed in the "Tamil homelands," i.e. the "space" in the political lexicon of Pieris.

The unwritten policy of annihilation or assimilation of the Tamil nationality was introduced already in 1948 when Britain ceded power to the Sinhala elite, in the name of political independence. The Sinhala constitutions of 1948, 1972 and 1978 were unilaterally imposed without the consent of the Tamil nationality. Tamils were not party to any of the constitution making and it can be inferred from the Sinhala constitution that it was imposed to legally deprive the Tamils of their right to land, culture, language, education, employment and political expression.

Continued on page 55

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The forced settlement of Sinhala military personnel and ex-convicts currently in vogue in the heart of Batticaloa, Jaffna, Mannar and Trincomalee is reminiscent of what the Roman Conquerors did in the Hellenistic regions of Europe in the first century. Under the name of progress, the international community with the support of India is aiding and abetting this process of planned extinction of Ceylon Tamils who have always retained a distinct identity vis-à-vis Tamils of Indian origin. Batticaloa, Trincomalee, Mannar and Jaffna had a specific Tamil cultural and linguistic identity that is now being defaced and destroyed.

In 1675 the Dutch Governor Van Goens confirmed that only Tamils inhabited the Northern and Eastern districts of Ceylon. According to the British census of 1827 there were no Sinhalese living in the districts of Trincomalee and Batticaloa. The same census maintains that the Tamils comprised 81.8 % and Muslims 16.9%. It is only the British data of 1881, 1891 and 1901 that holds that the Sinhala population in the Eastern province fluctuated between 3.7 % to 5.2% during these 20 years. (For more on this, see, A.J. Wilson, The Break Up of Sri Lanka, C. Hurst, London, 1988, p. 219). Today, with the government-aided and accelerated process of assimilation, the Sinhala population in the East is equal to the rest, if not more.

The Sinhala government has total monopoly over the island's economy, commerce, military, politics and media. In the past thirty years, they have managed to convince the world that they are dealing with terrorism and they received unconditional support from many European and North American states in decimating the Tamils or to chase away those who refused the process of assimilation as asylum seekers. Today, these countries see the refugee issue as an economic burden and want to reduce the push factor that catapults refugees to their shores. This effort is doomed to failure because these nations refuse to recognize the fact that they are dealing not with a democratic polity but with a totalitarian regime that seeks to have an exclusive ethno-religious polity under the banner of democracy - a label that has no relevance to the political reality.

Even after sacrificing over a hundred thousand innocent Tamil children, women and men on the altar of exclusivist Sinhala-Buddhist hegemony, it is the euphonious spirit of subjugation and conquest that is evident in the statements of G. L. Peiris. If subjugation is another name for reconciliation, then the issue here is not politics but good Vs evil. The Tamil opinion is very firm that association with evil is always wrong. Aggressor and victim cannot reconcile while the victim is still trampled under the foot of the aggressor. ◆

Joseph A. Chandrakanthan, PhD (Ottawa), ThD (St. Paul) is Bioethicist in the Centre for Clinical Ethics and University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics and Associate Professor in the Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto.



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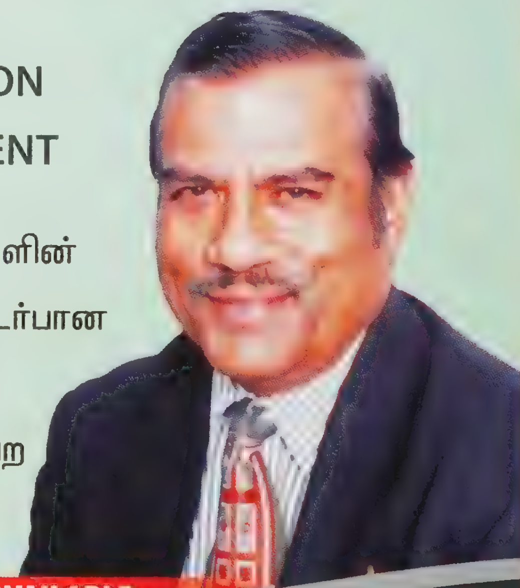
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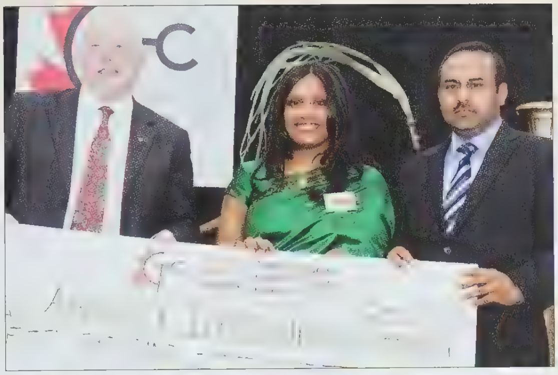
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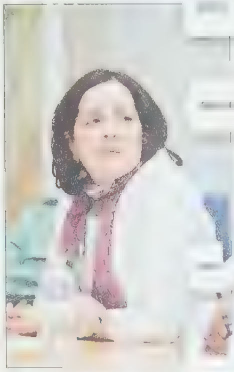
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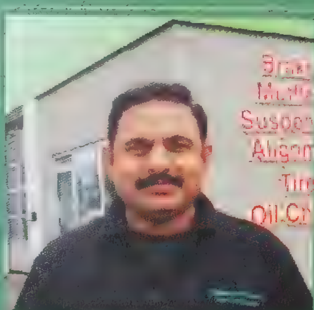

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Neethan Shan



Tamil Heritage Month: A Growing Movement to Promote Our History, Heritage and Culture

Tamil Heritage Month is a strategic, symbolic and effective first step towards building a movement to protect our heritage, share our histories and empower our communities in the diaspora. It aims to celebrate the histories of Tamils and their contribution to the social, cultural, political and economic strength of the countries where Tamils live. Even though the initiative targets everyone, it aims to reach young Tamils and non-Tamils in very specific ways.



With the overwhelming support of many organizations, media and individuals in the Tamil community, the inaugural year, 2010, went very successfully. During 2010, we released an official poster, launched a website, published a guidebook on Tamils and conducted a beautiful final event titled Thamizh Vizha. In addition to those activities, many organizations held their own events and activities to celebrate Tamil Heritage Month. This trend has continued for the past three years successfully. During the final event of 2011, we launched a petition based campaign to get various municipalities to officially proclaim Tamil Heritage Month. This set the stage for what followed in 2012. The official proclamation by various levels of government is critical for us to access resources, to hold events, to partner with libraries, school boards, governments etc and most importantly to educate youth and non-Tamils about the richness of Tamil heritage. Today, we are delighted to have proclamations from municipal governments of Ajax, Brampton, Markham, Oshawa, Pickering, Toronto, Whitby and York Region declaring January as Tamil Heritage Month. Many other municipalities will join them in the upcoming years.

We are hopeful that in 2013, we will be able to get Tamil Heritage Month Act passed provincially with the consensus of the all three parties represented at the legislature in Ontario. In addition, during this year, we have begun discussions with representatives at the federal level to have the Government of Canada proclaim Tamil Heritage Month. Finally, another goal has been to expand this initiative to other cities and countries across the world. In 2012, we laid the foundation for Tamil Heritage Month to be declared in other countries including the United States, European countries, Australia and New Zealand.

A unified collective movement like this one needs to be documented and its successes and challenges need to be shared widely for further learning in future. We are looking forward to further growth, expansion and accomplishments together in years to come. ◆

Neethan Shan is a founder of Tamil Heritage Month and is the chair of Tamil Heritage Month Coordinating Committee.

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Fred Carver



Commencement of "Thai" Paves the Way for New Opportunities

"Thai pi'ranthaal vazhi pi'rakkum" (தை பிறந்தால் வழி பிறக்கும்) means "the commencement of Thai paves the way for new opportunities". Sadly the reason the Sri Lanka Campaign exists is because for many people in Sri Lanka these opportunities are very limited: the military's vice-like grip on the north and east, the regime's clamping down on all forms of dissent, and the manner in which war crimes suspects continue to hold the whip hand over their surviving victims contribute to a culture of fear and oppression which prevents Sri Lankans of any ethnicity from getting on with their lives.

But this year will bring opportunities to change that. In March the UN's Human Rights Council will review Sri Lanka's progress over the last year, and whilst the Commonwealth's decision to host its Annual Summit in Sri Lanka in November is disgraceful, it does bring opportunities to shine a bright light on the wrongs of the regime – particularly if Commonwealth Nations follow the Canadian Prime Minister's lead and refuse to send their Head of Government.

These will be our priorities for the year to come. I believe they will also be the priorities for many people here, and I hope we can count on your support.

Traditionally there has also been another priority to much Canadian activism: that on the Tamil right to self-determination. I am not a lawyer, but am aware that self-determination is understood in international law as having two meanings. First self-determination is a fundamental right of peoples guaranteed in Chapter 1, Article 1, part 2 of the UN Charter, and elaborated in a 1960 declaration of the UN General Assembly. This right, which was a significant part of decolonisation movement, is often referred to as 'external' self-determination. Second, it is defined for a different purpose in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights as the right for peoples to "freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." This is often referred to as 'internal' self-determination.

Clearly many Tamils in Sri Lanka don't enjoy these rights – the direct intervention of the military, paramilitary groups, and Basil Rajapakse's Presidential Task Force for the North preclude it. But what is not always understood is that independence is neither always necessary, nor ever sufficient, for self-determination. It is never sufficient because peoples never fit neatly into geographic areas, and it is not always necessary because a regime more inclusive than the Rajapaksas might potentially be able to satisfy demands for self-determination within a loose federal state.

Whether that is possible is not a question for the Sri Lanka Campaign to answer. We remain uncommitted on the question, although we have individual members on both sides. But what is clear from talking to Tamils in the north of Sri Lanka is that what is at threat is not so much the idea of a Tamil Nation (which is no stronger or weaker than it has been for some time) but the Tamil identity (which is under siege from forced Sinhalisation, the military's intervention in northern commercial

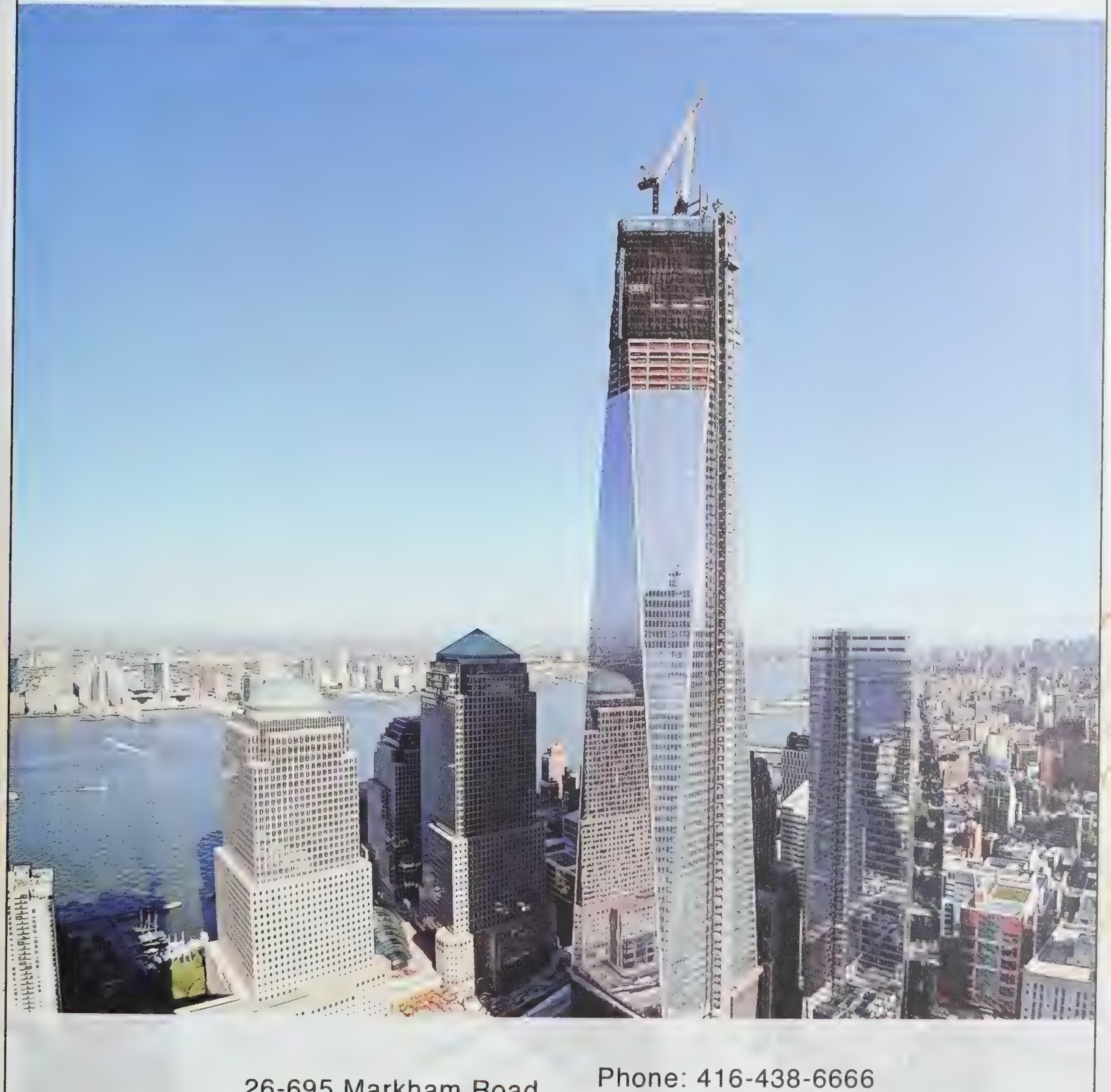
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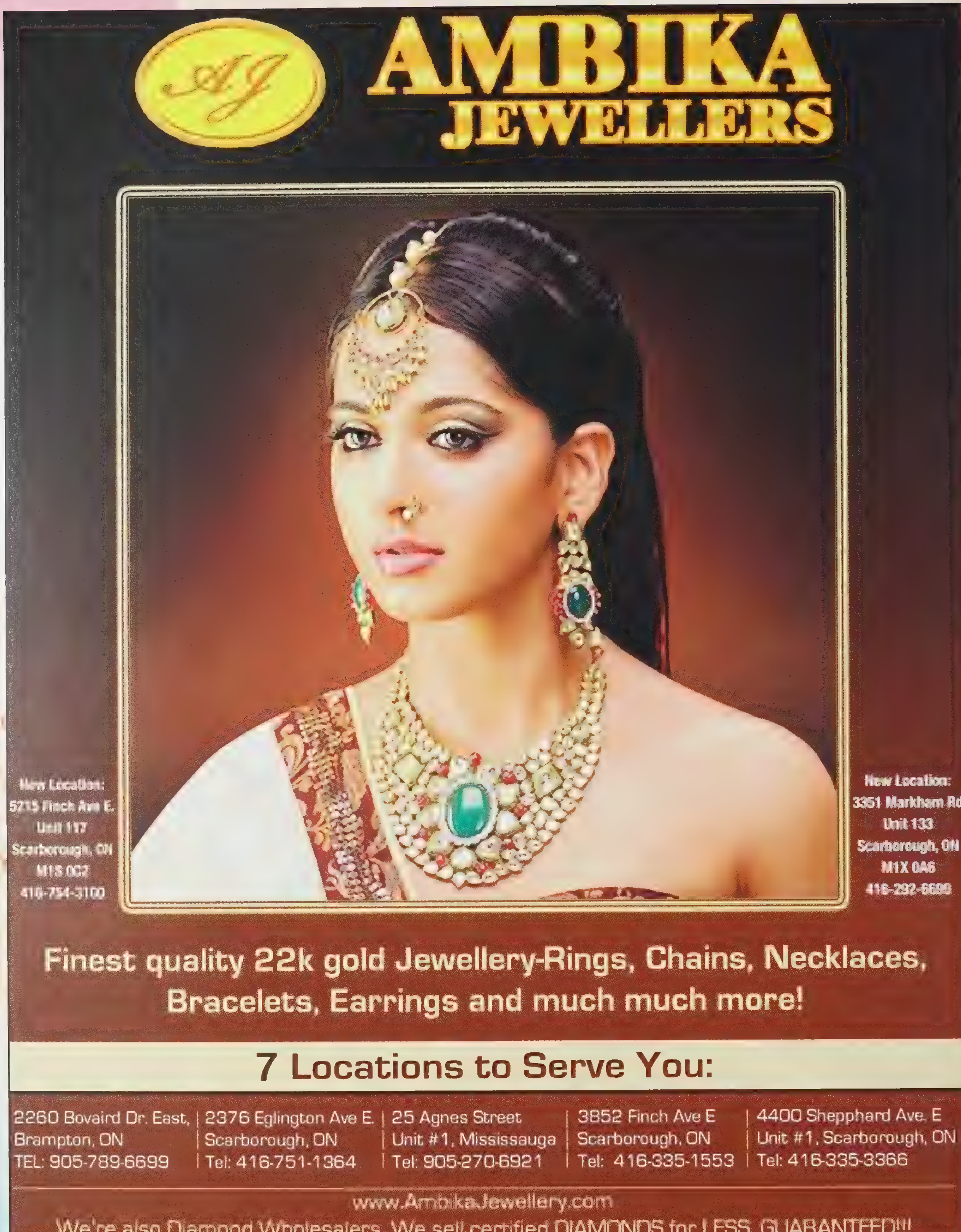
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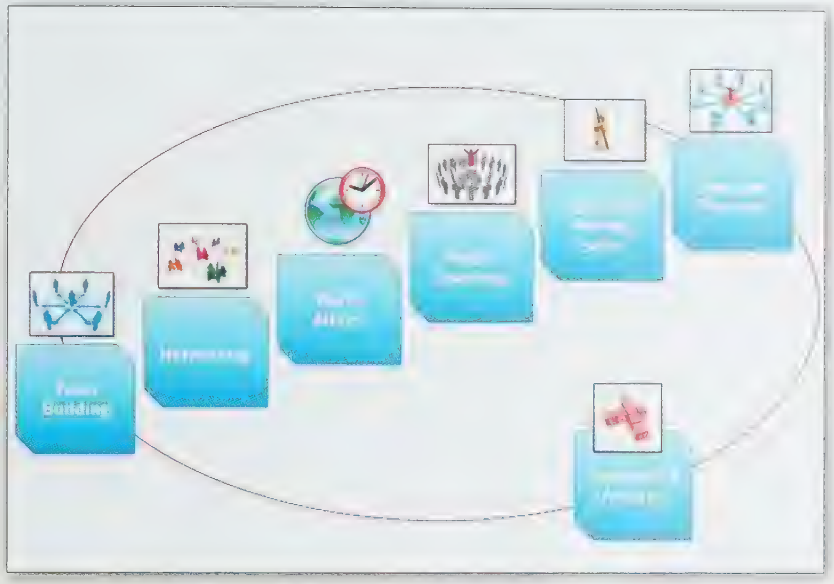

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Developing Leadership through Innovation



Leaders aren't born, they are nurtured and developed. This is the driving force behind CTC's exciting new initiative, which was launched in January 2012. The Centre for Leadership and Innovation was founded with the mission to build and promote leadership and innovation amongst Tamil Canadians and other multicultural communities. It is registered as a non-profit organization.



Times of great change require leaders who recognize and seize opportunities for innovation, a catalyst for a successful and rewarding future. CFLI's goal is to provide an inspiring and supportive environment that will help individuals become leaders and leverage their full potential to bring about innovative change.

To achieve this goal, our focus is to provide a continuous learning environment through a holistic training approach to nurture and develop the following skills amongst our future leaders:

- Leadership qualities
- Public Speaking
- Self-confidence
- Communication and written skills
- Personal responsibilities
- Interpersonal and teamwork skills
- Political and social awareness

Youth Leadership Program:
CFLI's first major initiative was the launch of the Youth Leadership Program. In April 2012 a pilot program was launched with 20 children ranging in ages from 10 to 16. This was a joint initiative with U-Learn-to-Talk Club, a leadership development organization based in Ottawa. The goal of this program is to help kids become strong leaders of tomorrow, with a primary focus on public speaking skills. Leveraging on the success of the Pilot program, two new sessions were launched in the fall term. The plan is to launch three sessions this winter term, with the goal of having over 100 children participating in our sessions by the end of 2013.

Our Vision:
We want to continue to build on the success of the YLP and expand the programs being offered. The workshops will be geared not only toward youth but for adults as well. As illustrated in the chart below, our vision is to design programs that will spark innovation, collaboration and grow leaders. These will be the building blocks for formation of a leading edge think tank or policy institute focused on research and analysis concerning topics such as social policy, political strategy, economics, technology, and culture.◆

Umesh Vallipuram is Vice President for Corporate Development at a global investment management firm. He is one of the co-founders and Board of Director at CFLI.

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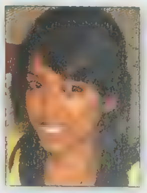
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Gayathri Naganathan

A Defining Moment in the Wake of Tragedy:





Tharmini Kuhathasan

Understanding what Women's Rights mean in the Tamil Community

India continues to grapple with the public outcry and unrest following the violent gang rape and subsequent death of a young student in New Delhi in December of 2012. As details of the tragedy continue to unfold, violence against women and women's rights have been pushed to the forefront of our collective consciousness. Certainly there are different perspectives on the issue and everyone from politicians to journalists to lay people has voiced their opinions through the public stage that is the Internet. Some are calling for the castration and execution of the culprits; others are victim-blaming suggesting that young Jyoti, whose name was released publicly by her family weeks after her death, should have been more careful, should have known better. Typically, many people fall somewhere in between on this spectrum when such violent sexual crimes take place. Given the exoticism that the Western world typically imparts onto India, the New Delhi incident has drawn a wholly distinct response from our Western news sources. This neocolonial line of thought suggests that this penchant for violent rape is inherent to Indian culture and is embedded in the social psyche. These commentators cite such practices as dowries for brides, female infanticide, and low literacy and education levels for girls and women as proof that India is a decidedly patriarchal society with misguided beliefs that the "West" has moved beyond. Narratives that identify gender-based violence as an Indian-specific problem perpetuate dangerous stereotypes, painting South Asian women as passive and submissive, and Indian culture as being unique in its mistreatment of women.



Of course violence against women is by no means a cultural phenomenon specific to India. It is an epidemic that crosses borders. It is a widespread social problem that is the product of a dominant culture that normalizes and excuses violence against women and girls. It flourishes within any society that systemically degrades and devalues women and their experiences. While these neocolonial notions of Indian culture are entirely misguided, the New Delhi incident has served to rouse an entire nation that has traditionally treated women and girls as second-class citizens.

But how deeply rooted are these misogynistic attitudes within our own Tamil community?



This is a difficult question to answer. Particularly given our dual identities as Tamil-Canadians; we are influenced not only by ancient cultural practices and traditions that we fiercely protect and preserve, but are also affected by the ever-encroaching spectre of attitudes and values. So as we sit precariously at this intersection between "Western" and "Eastern" ideologies, and pause to reflect on the tragic fate of Jyoti, we must review, with a critical eye, our own attitudes towards our mothers, daughters, sisters, and partners.

Continued on page 73

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Continued from page 71

For second generation Tamil-Canadians, much of our understanding of "Tamil culture" is filtered through the lens of Tamil cinema, which often simultaneously places a woman at a position of utmost respect and regard and at a place of utmost ridicule depending exclusively on how modestly or modernly the woman is dressed. A modest woman dressed in a traditional sari will elicit a prayer from the hero, while a woman dressed revealingly in modern clothes won't even get a second glance from our righteous protagonist. Asserting that dress, in and of itself, can dictate the social standing of a woman irrespective of her character, personality, and deeds, effectively objectifies a woman, stripping her of her personhood and identity.

We cannot deny that such prejudicial attitudes and behaviours toward women exist in our daily lives and we certainly cannot disregard the scope and extent of violence against women within our own community. But what cultural norms contribute to this pervasive climate of gender injustice? For one, the extreme stigmatization of rape and sexual violence makes disclosing incidences of abuse or assault incredibly difficult. The ways we police our daughters, sisters and partners' bodies via what's considered acceptable boundaries of female sexuality is an incredibly problematic practice as well. From seemingly innocuous passing comments regarding skin colour and weight to outright dictation of dress code and behaviour, our community asserts collective ownership of a woman's body through patriarchal control, reinforcing slut-shaming and victim-blaming and placing the heavy burden of protecting chastity and family honour squarely on the shoulders of girls and women.





In order to uncover the underlying cultural factors and work towards an intervention we must have open dialogue and an informed response, including actively working towards naming, identifying, and demystifying gender-based violence. The continued absence of any such genuine discussion about violence against women only serves to further stigmatize an already deeply taboo issue. But to kick-start such a movement towards gender equality and justice also requires a collective response. Men and women of all ages must stand in solidarity against all forms of violence against women because protecting the rights of the most systemically vulnerable members of our communities strengthens and protects the rights of everyone. We must get involved with and support the continued efforts and advances made by local initiatives and women's groups in South Asian communities, learning from their experiences and reinforcing our collective voice to stand up against gendered violence together.

Tens of thousands of men and women across India have taken to the streets throughout the end of 2012 and early 2013 over an issue that has been historically and deeply stigmatized within the community. Their unprecedented response and refusal to accept the country's climate of impunity for crimes against women suggests a shift in public attitudes concerning the treatment of women that cannot be understated. This is a defining moment for India, and it can be one for us as well. As we grapple with the pressures to both strengthen and shed our cultural identities as Tamil and Canadian individuals, we must choose to leave behind traditions that devalue our women and girls and limit their opportunities for success, happiness, and fulfillment. ◆

Gayathri Naganathan is a graduate student at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Medicine.

Tharmini Kuhathasan holds a Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Western Ontario.



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Importance of Public Speaking



Public speaking was once considered an unnecessary trait; a non-essential skill to have. Today, gaining vital skills in public speaking can change your life. One may think: Who needs public speaking skills when all they have to do is display their ideas on the newspaper, television or billboards for the whole world to see? The widespread accessibility of television, radio and, perhaps most significantly, the Internet, paired with the proper presentation, has made it possible for even the most awkward of public speakers to inspire and make their voice heard.

The spoken word, accurately presented and supported with power and confidence, still holds as strongly as it did when the world wasn't connected by the World Wide Web. Imagine state legislatures consisting of representatives who cannot speak, lawyers without the ability to present a convincing argument and teachers who cannot explain a lesson concisely. Any time that two or more people are together, the importance of speech in modern life is made abundantly clear. Take that speech away, and what you're left with is a jumble of ideas without communication.

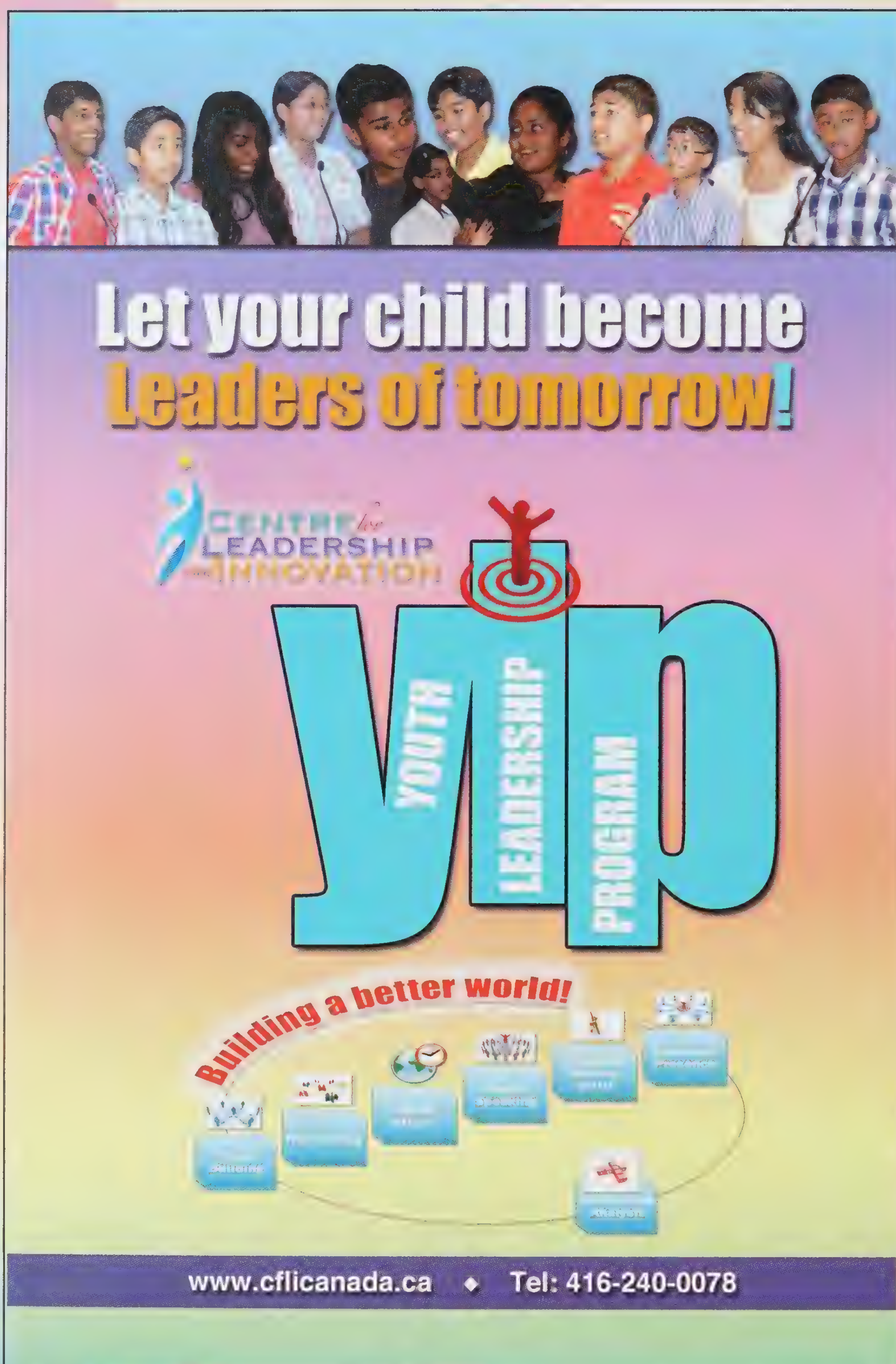


Students practice their skills at Centre for Leadership and Innovation's Youth Leadership Program

Both the audience and the presenter can benefit from a speech. The growth and development of society is helped by public speaking. When one shares their perspectives and opinions with the world, it gives us more of a room to improve and helps us learn from one another. Nowadays, almost everything you do require the ability to communicate effectively, including the military. A letter sent at the beginning of the Civil War states that a great number of men at camp cannot articulate clearly. Military leaders are picked because of their skills and not their ability to deliver instructions. One who cannot say a command in distinct language with strong volume to be heard reasonably far is not qualified to give command upon which human life will depend. Men have unnecessarily died because commands were misunderstood.

To be an effective leader requires the ability to communicate and inspire through speech. Every man, woman and child, whether they be teacher, mother, General, doctor, lawyer, waiter or negotiator, needs proper public speaking skills and an understanding of the importance of speech in modern life. It isn't enough simply to believe in an idea, or to be able to write it down. For an idea to grow and thrive it must first have a voice behind it to make it understood and believed. ◆

Raagavi Ramenthiran is a grade 7 student at John McCrae Public School in Markham and a Yellow Band member of the Youth Leadership Program.


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Arun Thurairajah



Top 10 Qualities to become Great Leaders

Extraordinary leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Junior, Nelson Mandela, and Barack Obama have appeared throughout history, making changes in the world around them. All of these figures had a significant impact on shaping our world today. In order for them to become great leaders, they all shared top ten qualities including vision, dedication, passion, responsibility, fairness, communication, openness, creativity, humbleness, and assertiveness.

The major quality that all leaders need is a vision. Without a vision, there is no goal for a leader to accomplish. The vision is what drives and fuels the rest of the qualities, needed to become a successful leader. As Malcolm X said, "A man who stands for nothing, will fall for everything".



Leaders must have dedication and a passion for what they're striving to achieve. Great leaders commit all of their time and effort into the task at hand, putting 100% of their effort into everything they do. They are affectionate of their goal, and love every step of the journey.

Responsibility is a trait that must be found within every leader. The head of the operation has to be able to keep their group organized, manage their time effectively, and make sure everything is running smoothly. Responsibility is like the glue that keeps all the traits together. Without it, the goal can't be achieved.

Great leaders should be fair with everyone. Leaders check all the facts before making any decision. Fairness builds trust between everyone on the team.



Communication is another essential element needed for any leader. A person can have a great idea and plan, but if they're not able to communicate their ideas with others, the ideas become worthless. Communication lets leaders present their ideas in an efficient manner.

Without openness and creativity, a leader would not be able to improve or change. A creative mind lets the leader explore and create new, unique ideas. With an open mind, leaders are willing to listen to any ideas, and implement them in their own plans to success.

While a good leader thinks they're the best, great leaders know they are equal to everyone else in their operation. Leaders need to be humble for everyone to succeed.

Assertiveness allows leaders to be strong and powerful towards what they believe. A leader knows when they need to take control of the operation and be confident throughout the end.

World leaders today cannot accomplish anything without these qualities. Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King had a vision, to make a change in the world they lived in. They were passionate for their belief and committed to achieve it.

A vision can't be accomplished without dedication, and dedication can't happen without passion for the goal. Communication and assertiveness allow the goal to be understood by the team, while openness and creativity allow the goal to improve. Responsibility, humility, and fairness build trust and morale within the operation. All of these traits interconnect with each other, in order to create an excellent leader. ◆

Arun Thurairajah is a grade 8 student at Stonebridge Public School and a Yellow Band member of the Youth Leadership Program.


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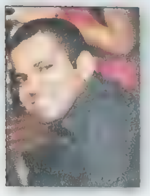
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From July 5 - 7, 2013, The Sony Centre for Performing Arts in Toronto will be home to the 26th Annual FeTNA Convention - North America's largest annual Tamil convention. Supported by Tourism Toronto, the convention will attract up to 3,000 Tamil intellects, scholars, artists, social activists and guests from many parts of the world, including large participation from the USA and Tamil Nadu, India.

The Federation of Tamil Sangams of North America (FeTNA) has been successful in bringing together Tamil organizations and members across the USA and Canada to act on a common interest: preserve the traditional and historical value of Tamil.

Inaugurated in 1988 by five Tamil Sangams, FeTNA is a registered not –for- profit umbrella organization with over forty member organizations, largely from various states. Since inauguration, FeTNA has organized annual conventions and completed its successful Silver Jubilee convention last year in Baltimore. In addition to preserving Tamil heritage, the convention has evolved into addressing a number of strategic needs including social and economic prosperity.

With an aim to strengthen the relationship between Tamils from USA, Canada and Tamil Nadu, Canadian Tamil Congress (CTC became a member of FeTNA in 2010.



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Continued from page 83

Having sent delegates to the conventions in Connecticut, South Carolina, and Baltimore, CTC expressed interest in hosting FeTNA in Toronto. Following a successful bid, FeTNA awarded CTC with the opportunity to host the 2013 Convention in Toronto, making this the very first time in its 25 year history that the FeTNA Convention will be held outside of the USA.

There is an energetic buzz of excitement as we plan for the convention! Community members and organizations have been working enthusiastically to create an inspiring and motivating experience for you!



FeTNA 2013 is also an opportunity to showcase Toronto - the city that is home to the world, and tap into the opportunities that this city and



province brings. With the help and participation of as many Tamil Canadians and organizations as possible, we can reach new heights with the convention and truly make history, leaving Toronto to be forever spoken about! ◆

FeTNA 2013 in Toronto will feature three parallel events:

- A full day stage program at the Sony Centre for the Performing Arts with performances from various Tamil Sangams, and guest artists from India
- Trade displays that are uniquely catered to the event,
- Workshops and networking events, covering a variety of hot topics and age groups

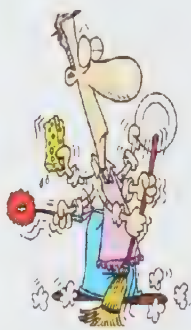
Some of the planned events include:

- Tamil language explored through the arts, literature and history
- Speeches and performances :
  - Children / Youth - Debates and speech competitions
  - Adults - local and International Tamil scholars, advocates and artists
- Workshops :
  - Children / youth - focuses on fun, attractive ways to learn and retain Tamil
  - Adults - focus on healthy living matters; networking session for health professionals
- Tamil Literacy
- Networking :
  - Young professionals (ages 23 – 35) mixer to create a progressive and talented network of young professionals
  - Business mixer to strengthen and support growing Tamil small business leaders and entrepreneurs
  - Bloggers Forum
- Single Mixers.

2013 is the Centennial year of Thani Nayagam Adikalar. This year's FeTNA convention will be in commemoration of the contribution of this respected Tamil Scholar who was also known as the "Roving Ambassador for Tamil". Thani Nayagam Adikalar played an instrumental role in setting up the International Association for Tamil Research (IATR) and also organized the first World Tamil Conference

Piragal Thiru, a former Director of Canadian Tamil Congress is a Director of FeTNA and the Convention Coordinator for FeTNA 2013

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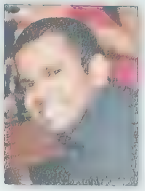
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Vidhya Magendran

Finding Life Partners: Challenges and New Opportunities





Piragal Thiru

Young Tamils are facing the same challenge that many of their mainstream counterparts face these days: finding a life partner!

Caught up in today's fast paced workforce, young people find little time to meet that special someone. And as the university and college years grow dim, it becomes even more difficult to find and create genuine connections with other singles. Those of us in the Tamil community tend to believe that finding a life partner should be a cinch - after all, there are numerous marriage brokers, online matrimonial sites, and searches conducted by our parents, aunts and uncles.

But what happens when our family searches are not fruitful?

Accessible options are: bars, social mixers, online dating, and speed dating. While all options provide risks and benefits, the advantage of online dating or speed dating is that it removes the ambiguity – the individuals who meet in these spaces are clearly searching for a partner; you need not wonder whether that individual you just met is single or attached.

While online dating is a good option for those who are able to figure out the genuine characters from those not-so-genuine, most young professionals need a better solution to help them with their search!

We can look to other communities for meaningful solutions. The Jewish and Ismaili communities are adept at hosting community-focused mixers



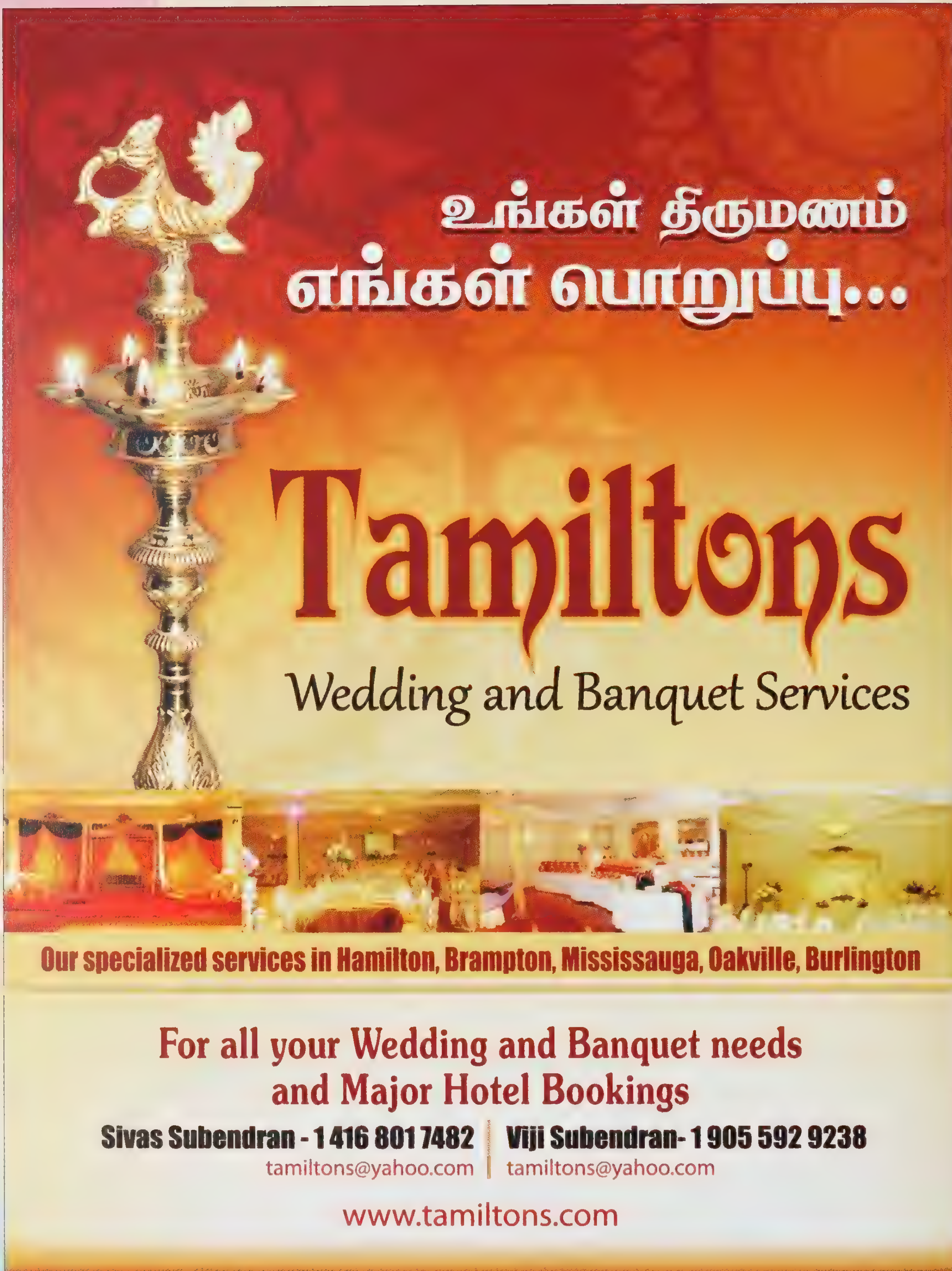
and/or speed dating events that allow their young professionals to meet marriageable partners in a safe and comfortable way.

Speed dating allows men and women to rotate through mini-dates; each one-on-one mini-date lasts anywhere from 3 to 10 minutes, depending on the time allotted by the organizer. All participants are given a response card, where they can discreetly note down their yes/no response to each participant. At the end of the evening, the event organizer will collect all participant cards. A day or two after the event, the organizer will notify participants with the contact information of their matches. A match is determined only if both parties have responded 'yes' to each other on their response cards.

Speed dating provides some significant advantages over other options:

- It allows multiple meetings (or dates) in a short period of time
- It becomes much easier to determine whether a particular individual may be a suitable match when meeting in person.
- The awkwardness of those first dates is greatly reduced due to the structured nature of speed dating.
- The post-event match notifications mean that participants can avoid the pressure of either selecting or rejecting other participants in person.
- Filtered events improve matching outcomes when using common criteria such as age or religious background.

The Jewish, Ismaili and other communities have been successful at providing dynamic and modern solutions for their young professionals to find life partners. It's time for the Tamil community to invest in future generations by supporting new ways to find marriageable partners for our singles! ◆


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Indran
Amirthanayagam



Tamil Resurrection

Am standing outside;
don't know how to get in.
Am standing outside,
sun burning my skin.

Am standing outside
'til evening drops,
night falls. Don't know
how to make night

rise or evening
take flight. I write
four beat blues,
shuffle in my shoes.

I am free deliciously
to sing up the tree.
I will land in Heathrow
or via satellite

on the Moon
and beyond.
I am irresponsible,
a Tamil, a dreamer,

a boy. I am alive
still and will not
die off like a tune.
I will sing

for my supper
and school.
I wear the colors
in case I run

into another fool
who lives by
old rules. I believe
in marbles

and tuck shops,
spicy fish.
I am English,
Tamil, and Welsh

for the bards.
I am your friend
in chapter and verse,
a poet who cannot

be shut off
like a spout.
I am ground water
and my source

is deep, hidden,
No hound dog
or metal detector
can sniff me out.

I promise not
to explode
but hear my song
and give me

a deed
to the land
where
I am buried.

Indran Amirthanayagam is a member of the United States Foreign Service. He writes poetry, essays and a blog in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese. Indran won the Paterson Prize in 1994 for his first book The Elephants of Reckoning. His forthcoming collection Uncivil War will be published by Tsar Books in April, 2013.


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Phillip Pradeep Koneswaran



Annapoorani - 75 Years of Nautical Pride

Decades before Eelam Tamils migrated throughout the globe, a small group of pioneers sailed the big seas. They were one of the first Tamil ambassadors to the United States and many other nations on the way.

It all started in the town of Valvettithurai on the Jaffna peninsula.

Valvettithurai has importance in the history of Eelam Tamils, not only for being the birthplace of many prominent Tamil leaders, but also for its might over the seas, international trade and social development. It is not only in the recent years that Eelam Tamils have shown nautical strength and power.

In 1938 a convoy of our pride, social and economical development & international cooperation, left the shores of Valvettithurai and sailed strong and bold across oceans, seas and international borders and arrived at the Gloucester harbour, in Boston, USA.

The "Annapoorani", one of the many world-class sail ships the Tamils built, was owned and operated by Eelam Tamils for trade and travel across international borders. History books show that during the time of the Annapoorani, the Eelam Tamils had a 200-year history for being masters of ships and sails. The Valvettithurai port was one of the busiest in the region.



The Annapoorani – Her crew: Thandayal (Captain) Kanagaratnam Thampipillai (48), Sinathamby Sithamparapillai (28), Thamotharampillai Sabaratnam (28), Pooranavelupillai Subramaniam (29), Aiyadurai Ratnasamy (24)

In the year 1936, an American tourist and a sail ship enthusiast while visiting Sri Lanka (Ceylon), came across the Annapoorani. It was love at first sight. William A. Robinson, a wealthy American businessman, bought the 89-foot British-style Sailor ship immediately. He was determined to buy this sail ship as a gift to his wife. Although having experienced the sails of many such ships, Robinson found uniqueness and a special interest in this one, built by Sundara Mestriar, an Eelam Tamil, in the year 1930.

The sail ship was built in Valvettithurai, utilizing the craftsmanship, expertise and engineering capabilities of the Tamils. Building a sail ship is not a simple matter. Salt-water corrosion, the elements of nature and weather, the ability to withstand ocean waves and meeting navigational standards are only some of the concerns when building an 89-foot long sail ship. However, in its time, the Annapoorani was recognized as a sail ship capable of travelling international waters; a product of excellent engineering and social development of the Eelam Tamils.

The Annapoorani is a "hermaphrodite brig", meaning two-masted vessel square-rigged forward and schooner-rigged aft. In the United Kingdom, this type of vessel is called a "brigantine". The same English dictionary also speaks of the Tamils and Hindus, saying, "the Tamils are members of the most

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enterprising branch of the Dravidian race, mostly Hindus. They are numerous throughout South India and northern Ceylon. The language is the oldest, most cultivated and best known of the Dravidian languages."



Despite Robinson's experience at sea, he was wise to employ the services of the Tamils to arrange for delivery of the Annapoorani to Boston.

On February 27th 1937 and under the command on Thandayal (captain) Kanagaratnam



Thampipillai, 4 Eelam Tamil crew members, William Robinson and insured by Lloyds of London, the Annapoorani set sail towards the open ocean. This was to be Annapoorani's last voyage under the command of a Tamil captain.

Although Robinson had fitted the ship with an engine, she still largely depended on her sails. Their voyage was to take them through the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, then the Mediterranean sea and finally into the vast openness of the Atlantic Ocean, totalling over 520 days and nights in total.

Leaving Valvettithurai, the Annapoorani sailed around the southern belly of Sri Lanka (Ceylon) for 3 days and made a 4-day stop in Colombo. From Colombo, she crossed the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea before reaching Aden, a port in Yemen. This portion of the trip lasted 23 days. There she remained at port for a period of 8 months. A slight setback had come in the way. Robinson was to meet his wife at Aden, where she would join him on board. However he received a cablegram notifying him that his wife was too ill to travel.

The ship sat at port while Robinson flew to America and some months after returned to Aden. After 8 months at port, the Annapoorani resumed her voyage with Mr. and Mrs. Robinson on board. From Aden to port Sudan and then Suez, she sailed through a narrow channel into the Mediterranean Sea.

Then came another setback. A heavy storm drove them off course by almost 250 miles towards the coast of Lebanon. Finally they reached Candia, a large island in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Thanks to the unexpected storm, the voyage from Suez to Candia would last 32 days. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson flew back to America and arranged captain Donald A McCuish to fly to Candia and meet up with the ship. After being at port in Candia for 30 days, the Annapoorani set sail once again, with captain Donald McCuish providing guidance assistance to Thandayal (captain) Kanagaratnam Thampipillai. Robinson felt that a captain with knowledge of the western seas would prove to be of great value to Thandayal (captain) Kanagaratnam Thampipillai.

Now with a crew of 6, the Annapoorani sailed another 36 days and reached Gibraltar, where she stayed at port for 8 days.

On the final stretch leaving Gibraltar June 8th 1938, it took 41 days to reach Hamilton, Bermuda. It was a slow passage with not enough wind stirring most of the time to ruffle a sail. The engine fitted by Robinson



had failed by the time they had reached Gibraltar. They were left with only the Eelam Tamil built sails; their only hope of crossing the Atlantic Ocean. This 5,000 mile journey would not come easy. For

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many days, they sat idle on the ocean, as not a single whisper of wind would move them along. The captain had estimated the crossing of the Atlantic to last 30 days. Supplies and food were short on board. Yet the determined Tamil sailors, weakened not the slightest, pressed through the final stretch of the ocean.

The crew encountered many difficulties during their journey. From the notes and diaries of the crew, it is also known that the Annapoorani came close to a catastrophic collision. After about nine days of leaving Gibraltar, a thick layer of fog blanketed the Atlantic Ocean. The Annapoorani had a narrow escape from being cut in half by a transatlantic liner.

Finally the Annapoorani reached Hamilton, Bermuda. This must have seemed a great relief to the crew. At port, they replenished their food and water supplies and spent some nights and days discovering the local cuisine. On July 28th 1938, the voyage resumed.

The first to sight the vessel in Boston was Carl D. Hill, light keeper at the Eastern Point, who informed the arrival of the Annapoorani to the waterfront, recorded at 12:45 PM on August 2nd 1938. Shortly after a tug escorted the vessel to the wharf. The Tamils were greeted with warm welcome and celebrations. Their cultural distinctness sat very well with the Americans. The Boston Globe called these men "...a fine lot of men, if you treated them right and respected their religious beliefs".

The Americans were awestruck by the Eelam Tamils' strength, aspiration and motivation. They found that when the Tamils religion, cultural identity and birthright were respected, one wouldn't find more loyal companions even while death stared them straight in their faces. It is an accurate description of Eelam Tamils, who are known for their immaculate hospitality of visitors and hosts.

The crew and the captain of the Annapoorani spent many more days and nights in their new world, entertaining their new friends with art, music and culture from their birthplace. They left a lasting impression on the American soil before their voyage back to the Jaffna peninsula by a steam ship through Singapore. ◆

Phillip Pradeep Koneswaran is a student of York University majoring in Astrophysics. He currently works in IT & Telcom.

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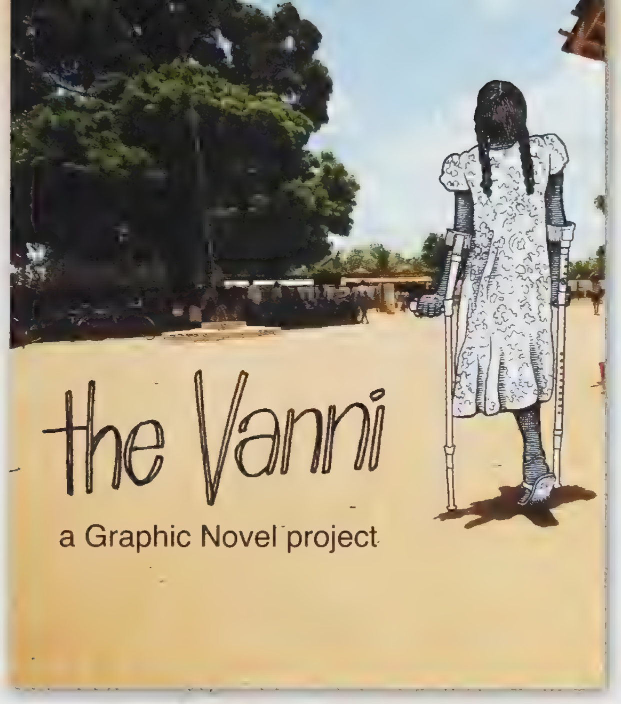
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Benjamin Dix



Lindsay Pollock

For years in Japan and parts of Europe comics about serious topics have commanded a huge readership. Now the rest of the world is catching up and graphic novels are the biggest growth area in publishing. Examples of political or reportage comics include 'Palestine';



'Persepolis' - about life in Iran; and 'Maus', which is about the Holocaust.

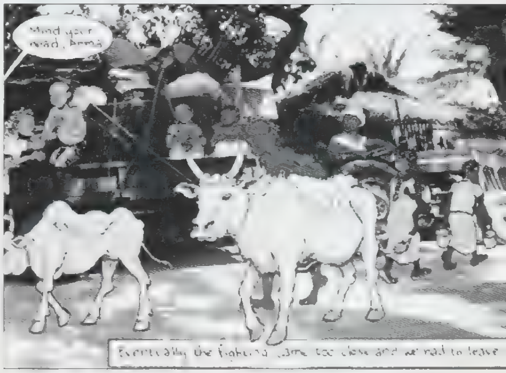
Working with artist Lindsay Pollock, former UN staff Benjamin Dix is now writing a book on the Sri Lankan war. 'The Vanni' is about a fictional but representative Tamil family between 2006 and 2013. The book is told from the perspective of Antoni, the father. He is in London, in the present day, seeking asylum and reflecting on his experiences in the preceding years.

The story will be written directly from amalgamated survivor testimony, so that the events depicted are accurate – helping the reader understand the situation and encouraging further research and political engagement with the topic. Chapters will cover the significant events that affected Tamil families like displacement, the assault on the beach and internment in Manik Farms.

This novel approach should bring a new audience to the global campaign for justice in Sri Lanka. The combination of words and pictures renders the story in a tangible and affecting way, and makes complicated subject matter accessible to the common reader.

'The Vanni' will be available for free on the Internet, presented with multimedia resources for interested readers to learn more, including audio and video, short essays giving a précis of important topics and links to related organizations.

Produced independently, the book is paid for in part through a 'crowd-sourcing' model. This refers to a project that is enabled by multiple small donations from a number of sources, often individuals. Around the world, art works and humanitarian projects alike have been completed through crowd-



sourcing and as the saying goes, 'every little helps'.

For 'The Vanni' the authors will spend two years interviewing survivors, writing and drawing their story, as well as building and hosting the website.

'The Vanni' is supported by The Sri Lanka Campaign, award winning author Arundhati Roy, former BBC reporter and author Frances Harrison and endorsed by Canadian Tamil Congress. Beyond being an education tool, Benjamin hopes that 'The Vanni' stand as a lasting record of the war and a tribute to all those who suffered through it. ◆

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Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu



From Reconciliation to Impeachment: From Citizen to Subject

As we moved into 2012, the buzzword was reconciliation and with it the acronym - understood by too few of our fellow citizens- was LLRC. The Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission Report had been presented to the president who in turn had sent it to parliament. There was some hope that since the commission had been set up by the president, that he would accept its recommendations in full and get on with the task of implementation. This was the commission he and his had told the world would answer and lay to rest all doubts, queries and allegations about the last stages of the war, in particular.

The report in English was eventually sent to the Central Bank- yes the Central Bank- for translation into the two official languages so that the majority of Sri Lankans would be able to read it. This, I understand is now possible, a good nine to ten months later. Months went by and the international community led by the US at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva passed an anodyne resolution on Sri Lanka in March 2012, essentially calling on the regime to expedite implementation of the LLRC recommendations, report to the Council on what it intended to do on accountability- which the resolution noted the LLRC fell short on- and avail itself of the assistance of UN bodies in the implementation process. The High Commissioner for Human Rights was charged with the responsibility of reporting to the Council in a year on progress made with assistance availed of. India, frustrated, even angered and humiliated by the broken promises of the regime regarding a political settlement, was amongst the 24 countries that voted for the resolution.



The regime first tried to defeat the resolution by sending packs of ministers, officials and apparatchiks to Geneva in a vulgar display of overkill and loutish behavior. Having failed, it failed in turn in its scoundrel's resort to arouse the patriotism of the masses back at home in the full measure it desperately yearned for. By the time of Sri Lanka's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the Council in November, the regime had completed a Human Rights Action Plan and produced an Action Plan for the Implementation of the LLRC recommendations the status of which still remains that of a 'work in progress'.

Geneva, March 2012, in this respect was a Rubicon of sorts. It was the first real defeat of the regime and seen by the regime as such, its conduct of the war was on the agenda of a multilateral organization for the first time. India could no longer be taken for granted and there was general agreement even expressed in and by the media that the whole episode was a foreign policy cock – up, pure and simple. The Permanent Representative to Geneva was axed and eventually went to Havana having said her piece. The media had a field day – all its tabloid Christmases having come together, so to speak. One positive result was that in the aftermath of the hysteria about violated sovereignty and other impertinences, the regime showed signs of beginning to learn the art of international relations. The jury is

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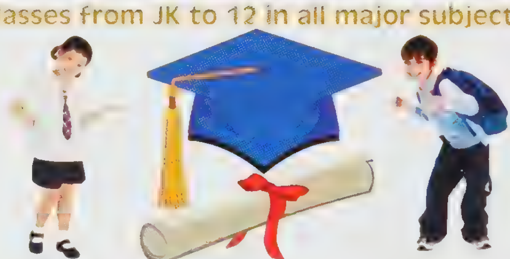
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Continued from page 103

out though on as to how much and for how long or indeed as to whether the signs were no more than flashes in the pan of defeat and disappointment.

Now at the end of 2012, there are articles on how the LLRC has been forgotten. A key reason for this – though by no means the sole one – is that the crisis of governance the LLRC report elaborates has been dragged to a new nadir with the shoddy sham of the impeachment of the Chief Justice. The buzzword for 2013 is surely "impeachment"; "constitutional crisis" perhaps coming a close second when we are into the second half of this month. No doubt this will have a bearing on Geneva, March 2013 and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in November; no doubt it should.

The point about all of this is how we have regressed. Take any yardstick of reconciliation and/or governance and you can see how thuggery- literally and metaphorically speaking- in the service of the consolidation of power by the ostensibly strong yet deeply insecure has taken hold and in a way that arguably would make even J.R. Jayawardene and R. Premadasa blush! What may yet save us now, as it did then, are the efforts of too few daring to dissent and resist the flagrant destruction of the institutions, processes and the political culture of a functioning liberal democracy. What we had was flawed, but not "floored" to the extent that it is now.

Take reconciliation for instance – where do the violent arrests of students and young people in Jaffna and elsewhere in the north, the continuing land grab in the north



and east, the presidential opening of the Lagoon's Edge Hotel in Nandikadal to service war tourism fit in with it? What of the fate of the Tamil women inducted into the forces – did they know what they were getting into or was it a case of being "taken into"? What about the last IDPs from Kepapalivu? Where was Kepapalivu and where is it now? How do things happen in post war Sri Lanka 2012 like in Marble Bay in the east, where as in apartheid South Africa, the land and the sea is roped off for VIPs, forces, and the general public including the inhabitants of the area, respectively? How does what happened at the Navinna Rajamahaviharaya at the end of November to address the "Muslim threat" to Sinhala Buddhists, reminiscent, according to some accounts, of a meeting of white supremacists in the Deep South of the 1950s USA, happen in post-war Sri Lanka with its extensive, costly and efficient security, law and order machinery, not to mention its kiri pani rhetoric of Chintanaya and reconciliation? How many IDPs could have been housed with the duty that was not levied on racing cars? Why do people from the north and east risk life and limb to end up in camps on Christmas Island? If they are economic refugees why are they leaving when economic development is supposed to be the priority? This is only part of it.

Likewise, with governance. Who interprets the constitution? Is natural justice a luxury post-war Sri Lanka cannot afford especially if it stands in the way of the regime getting its own way? As this columnist wrote some time ago and as the president is reported to have said in an inimitably candid statement of his idea of governance – it boils down to "ape minihava beraganna oney" and therefore it is "shape kerala ganna" all the way. Impunity rules as long as apparatchiks remain so. Contort, corrupt institutions and processes as a consequence; nurture and sustain a popular culture of subjects not citizens.

As long as she stands her ground, the Chief Justice will be impeached. The regime have in their ham-fisted, revengeful way made a heroine and a martyr out of her and aroused the legal fraternity in a defence of the judiciary in a way unimaginable in the desolate days of the Eighteenth Amendment and all the assaults on governance and the rule of law by this regime, before and since. The regime cannot back down now without looking weak and immature at the least.

And so it comes back to us. There is every sign of it getting worse before it begins to get better. This is what comes from destroying the prospects for reconciliation and from the certainty of impeachment, which is illustrative of the crisis of governance.

A disempowered man from Jaffna told me that things there look better but feel worse. He was an IDP, metaphorically speaking.

Is this the fate that awaits us who cling to a notion of citizenship?

The play is the thing; to be a part of and not merely watch. ◆

Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu is a human rights activist and Director of Center for Policy Alternatives based in Colombo, Sri Lanka

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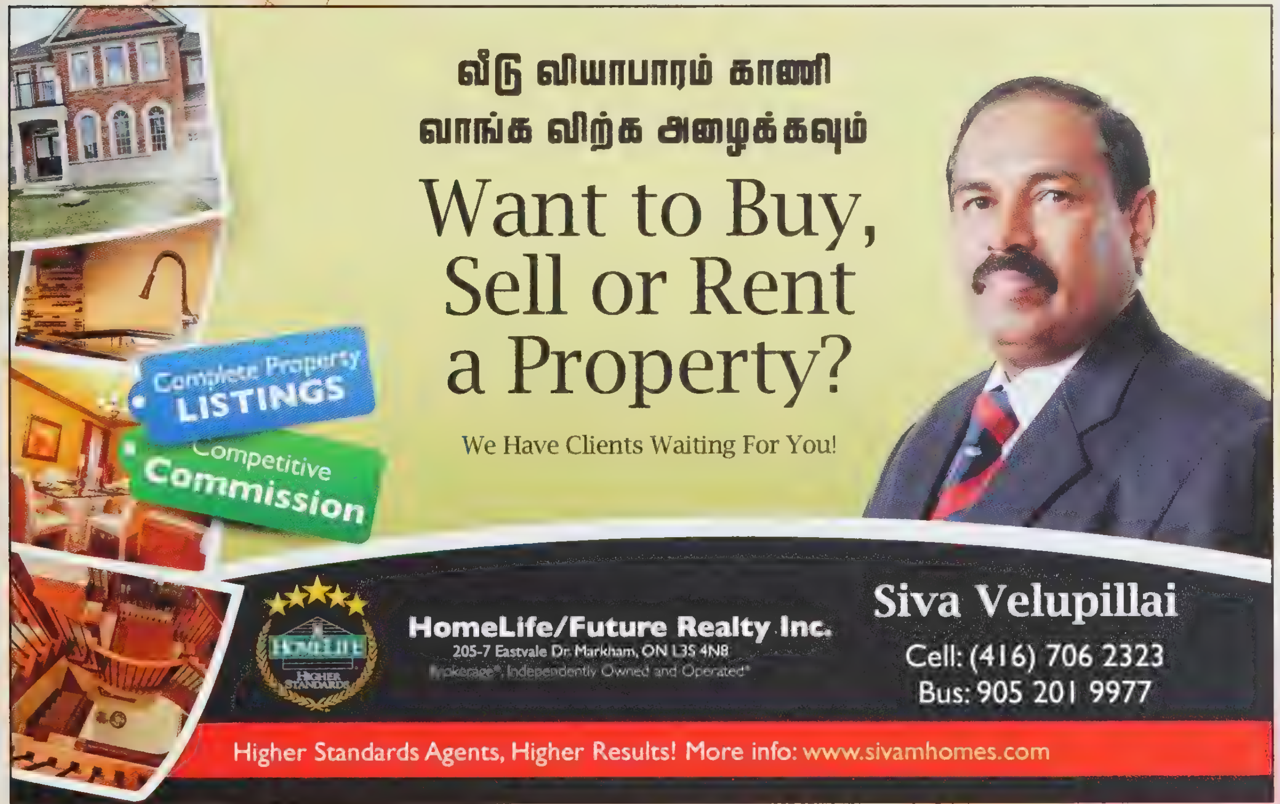
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Umananthini Rajendram - Singer

Umananthini started learning vocal classical music from her uncle Pon Sundaralingam at the age of 6. At a tender age of 14, the child prodigy in Umananthini made her way to the Konesh Orchestra band in Canada. With her melodious voice and performing in a number of local and international stages, Umananthini has built a formidable reputation as a singer among the Canadian Tamils. During her tenure, numerous recognitions have come her way including the title Canadian Mathura Kural hosted by Abdul Hameed. Umananthini has released her music album "Enn Ithayathin Oosai", which was written and composed by her. She completed her project with some of the most inspirational artists in the Indian Music Industry including S.P. Balasubramaniam, Pushpavanam Kuppusamy and Haricharan. ◆

Students of Guru Nirothini Pararajasingam

Nirothini Pararajasingam is an accomplished Indian classical dance performer, choreographer and teacher who strongly believes in promoting values of Indian culture through Bharathanatyam. She received her initial training in Bharathanatyam from well-known Gurus, including Smt. Balasundari Kanagasabai and Smt. Gowri Muthukumaraswami. She later mastered specialized techniques in Bharathanatyam through the guidance of Guru Vijayambikai Indrakumar. Her studies were concluded through the teachings of Guru Adayar K. Lakshmanan. She completed her Bharatha Choodamani diploma for dance and Nattuvangam at the Institute of Bharatha Choodamani and obtained her Bachelor of Science degree at Madras University.

In 1984 she began her teaching career in science and dance at the Colombo Hindu Ladies College in Sri Lanka for 5 years. During this time, she participated in numerous performances along with her students. This included the Harichandra Ballet for which she was awarded the title of "Nirthya Choodamani"; and Beeshma Ballet, which was the first production to be choreographed with over 90 students. In 1990, she initiated Nirthya Kalanjali Academy of Fine Arts and in 2009 launched Niro Dance Creations (NDC), a fusion of international dance forms, in Toronto, Ontario. Her troop has performed in various multicultural events and media productions. In addition, for 4 consecutive years, her students have performed at the North American FeTNA event. In 2009, she received the Lieutenant Governor Award. Overall, she is a creative choreographer who has successfully produced several programs and received numerous awards. ◆

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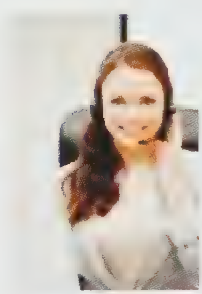
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Mayoo Mano

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Mayoo Mano is a student at York University majoring in biology and health management. Mayoo achieved wide acclaim in 2010 with the publication of her first book, a collection of poems, "நாம் பேசிக் கொண்டிருந்தபோது பெய்திராத மழை" *(The Rain That Didn't Come When We Were Talking).*

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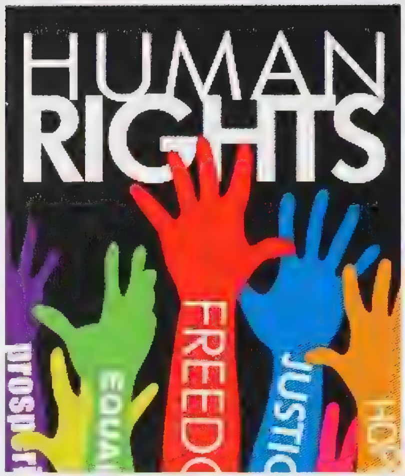
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Continued from page 63
enterprises, and the continued democratic deficit in the Northern Province).

Defending the Tamil identity against these threats requires a global mobilisation of all those who care about the inhabitants of the island. It also requires a clear focus on the ongoing human rights violations that plague the island, and also on their root cause – the total failure by both the Government of Sri Lanka, and the wider world, to hold the mass murderers of 2009 to account.

Many, indeed most, activism around Tamil issues recognises this – and yet the perception remains that much of the human rights advocacy in Sri Lanka is based in Tamil separatism. This perception continues regardless of facts, and is seen as a significant barrier to international lobbying – the international community being separatism averse. Why is this? And what can be done?



Part of the answer is that the Government of Sri Lanka's PR machine is very good at defining its opponents. In addition the international community is often actively looking for an excuse not to intervene. When these things are taken together they mean that the actions of a small minority are easily used to define the whole. No community in the world is without its extremists, but the extent to which the position of the extremists can be twisted to define the whole is dependent upon how many alternative voices are heard.

One of the most positive experiences of last year was the increase in the number of different voices criticising the Government of Sri Lanka – and the diversity of views they represent. The Government of Sri Lanka will continue to call human rights activists as terrorists and traitors, but the broader our movement is the less impact these words will have. ◆

Fred Carver is the Campaign Director of the Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice.

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The year 2012 saw various changes made to refugee law and the asylum system in Canada. These reforms will almost certainly have a profound impact on incoming refugees to Canada, and on the underlying values of our asylum system as a whole.

The right and procedures to claim status as a refugee to Canada are laid out in a number of Canadian laws, guided by our history and culture as well as international treaties and norms in refugee protection. An asylum claim can be made at any port of entry (land, air or sea), or at a Citizenship and Immigration Canada office, and all claims for citizenship are processed and decided upon by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). Recently however, two pieces of legislation have made vital changes to Canada's refugee policies: The Balanced Refugee Reform Act of June 2010, and the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act of June 2012. On December 15, 2012, both these acts entered into full force, bringing with them many changes to our refugee and asylum system.



Waiting times have changed to expedite processing, as well as reduce backlog. For claimants from designated countries of origin (countries that do not generally produce refugees, a list of which can be found on the CIC website), the waiting time will decrease from an average of 18 months to 30 to 45 days after referral of the claim to the IRB. For claimants from other countries, the new waiting time is approximately 60 days.

Changes have also been made affecting pre-removal risk assessment (PRRA) applications. The PRRA is a mechanism to ensure that persons being removed from Canada are not being returned to a country where they would be at risk or in danger of persecution. When a rejected claimant receives a removal order notice, they then have the opportunity to apply for a PRRA. Under the new laws, limits have been imposed on the availability of PRRA. Rejected claimants now have the right to one PRRA application one year after a negative refugee claim decision or a final PRRA decision. Furthermore, rejected claimants from a designated country of origin are barred from accessing a PRRA for 3 years (although, in the case of sudden change in a country's condition, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism can exempt certain individuals from this bar).

Modifications affecting humanitarian and compassionate considerations (H&C) have likewise been implemented. H&C grounds apply to persons with exceptional cases, who would not normally be eligible to become permanent residents of Canada. H&C does not assess risk factors such as persecution, risk to life, cruel and unusual treatment or punishment, but rather looks at ties in Canada with respect to children and family, as well as other factors. New H&C regulations stipulate that an H&C submission cannot be made while a refugee claim is pending, and that

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failed refugee claimants are barred from requesting H&C for one year after a negative decision (except in cases where a claimant's life is a risk if removed). These changes also include the elimination of the automatic stay of removal of certain failed refugee claimants after filing leave for judicial review at the Federal Court of Canada. This means that failed refugee claimants are now removed to their country of origin pending Federal Court review, and must request a stay on a case-by-case basis. This includes claimants who arrive as part of a designated "irregular arrival" and who thereby become "designated foreign nationals". These claimants must wait five years to apply for H&C considerations if rejected by the IRB, and must return to the country of origin upon receiving a removal order (if a stay is not granted).

The Refugee Appeal Division has also been introduced. As of December 15, 2012, appeals will be taken by paper submission, with oral hearings only in exceptional cases. Appeal decisions will now be expected within 90 days of the appeal, and claimants from designated countries of origin as well as designated irregular arrivals do not have access to RAD (all failed refugee claimants still have the option to appeal to the Federal Court).

Finally, other procedural and administrative reforms have also been instituted. These include: i) a loss of permanent resident status when the IRB finds that a person ceased to be a Convention refugee or a person in need of protection (for example, if they return to their country of origin); ii) the Refugee Protection Division (RPD) and Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) can no longer re-open previously decided refugee claims and appeals once a final decision is made at a higher level (i.e. RPD cannot re-open a case after RAD makes a decision); iii) the commencement on June 29, 2012 of the Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration pilot program, designed to support the removal of low-risk failed refugee claimants more quickly, expediting removal and reducing backlog.

There is much debate and heated discussion about why our government has implemented such changes, and the potential effects of these new laws. Are these measures necessary to tackle labour shortage or keep foreigners from abusing our system? Or are they designed to have an influence on which parts of the world immigrants can come from? Are these reforms the products of a right-leaning agenda, or necessary measures geared towards preparing Canada to be competitive in the more globalized world? No matter the reason however, it is certain that these new reforms will change the everyday realities of refugees and would-be refugees to Canada, and perhaps the very values our asylum structure is built upon. ◆

Kartiga Thavaraj is a Masters student in Political Sciences at McGill University, currently studying on exchange at the Paris Institute of Political Science (Sciences Po) in Paris, France.

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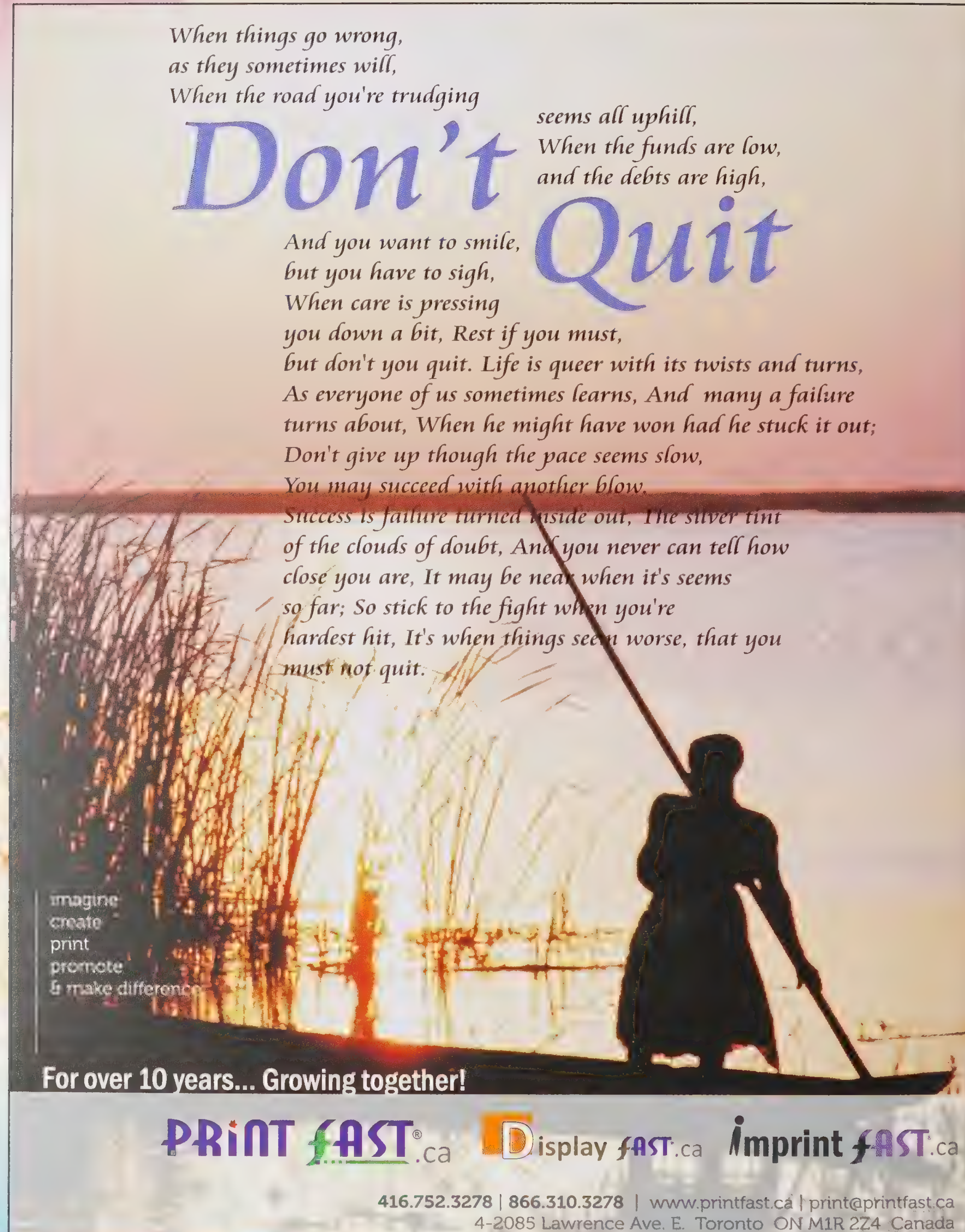
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but you have to sigh,
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you down a bit, Rest if you must,
but don't you quit. Life is queer with its twists and turns,
As everyone of us sometimes learns, And many a failure
turns about, When he might have won had he stuck it out;
Don't give up though the pace seems slow,
You may succeed with another blow.
Success is failure turned inside out, The silver tint
of the clouds of doubt, And you never can tell how
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so far; So stick to the fight when you're
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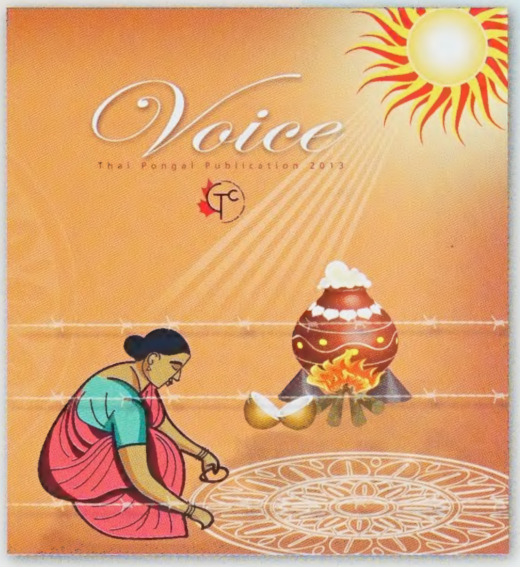
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